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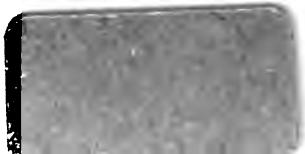
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**QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA**







QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY TISCHBEIN

# QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

BY

MARY MAXWELL MOLFAT

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS.

METHUEN & CO  
36 ESSEX STREET, W.C.  
LONDON



QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER THE PORTAIT BY TISCHBEIN

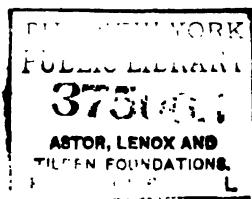
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*First Published in 1906*

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"It is a noteworthy fact that, if we except the mighty monarch still known amongst us as 'Old Fritz,' there is no member of our Royal House, whose memory is so cherished by the people, as the memory of Queen Louisa."—THEODORE MOMMSEN, speech commemorating the centenary of the Queen's birth, 10th March, 1876

"Das Ewig-Weibliche  
Zieht uns hinan."

—GOETHE

# QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

Then I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it to quench it, yet did the fire burn higher and hotter. . . . Afterwards he had him about to the back side of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of which he did also continually cast, but secretly, into the fire.<sup>1</sup>

THE Interpreter's parable is one which lends itself to the illustration of the story of Prussia during the Napoleonic epoch. When Frederick William III. succeeded to the throne in 1797, the fire of a genuinely national existence had but recently been kindled by Frederick the Great. To the character and influence of the wife of the new monarch—Louisa of Mecklenburg-Strelitz—it was largely due that all the efforts of Napoleon to quench the flame only made it burn higher and hotter. Not that hers was the only hand that poured on the oil. For the

<sup>1</sup> *Pilgrim's Progress.*

## 2      QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

single agent of the parable must be substituted the little group of devoted patriots who, in the darkest hour of Prussia's history, gave themselves to the task of secretly bringing about the restoration of the northern kingdom. They have long been known openly; and many are the ways which have been devised of honouring and perpetuating their memory. This is as it should be. But it is the emergence of Prussia from the disastrous Napoleonic wars as a united and progressive nation that is the lasting monument of such men as Stein and Hardenberg, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Fichte, Schleiermacher, William von Humboldt, and of the woman who grasped the importance of their work and did much to facilitate it in its earliest stages—the noble-hearted, beautiful Queen Louisa.

The leading characteristic of lives like hers has been indicated by Schiller in one of the finest of his single lines: "Es wächst der Mensch mit seinen grösstern Zwecken". Of no one could it be more truly said that she "grew with the purposes she set herself to fulfil". She grew also with the circle wherein she moved. It was a narrow enough circle to begin with. Her father, Prince Charles of Mecklenburg, was a younger brother of the reigning Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. He was not without ambition, his aim being to achieve success in a military career. He would probably have offered his services either to Maria Theresa of Austria, or to Frederick the Great, but for a turn of Fortune's





BIRTHPLACE OF QUEEN LOUISA

wheel which brought about the marriage of his sister Charlotte to George III. of England and likewise gave the young soldier his opportunity.

He accompanied the bride to London, and spent some time at the court of his brother-in-law, thereby becoming acquainted with the leading statesmen of the day and with the general conduct of affairs in England. He then joined an expedition despatched by the British Government to assist the Portuguese in their struggle to evade absorption by Spain. In the campaign which followed, he won considerable distinction, and this proved the stepping-stone to his appointment as representative of George III. in Hanover. That is to say, he became governor of the capital city and commander of the little army of the Electorate. Having married Princess Frederica of Hesse-Darmstadt, Prince Charles took up his abode in Hanover. Here his third daughter, the future Queen of Prussia, was born on 10th March, 1776.

At the time nothing seemed more unlikely than that her name, or the name of any of her contemporaries, would come to be associated with the downfall of Prussia. That country was still under the enlightened rule of Frederick the Great. The fame of his victories was fresh in all men's minds. Yet he was entirely free from illusions with regard to his success, and clearly perceived that, from first to last, he had been building on foundations laid in other reigns. His *Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg*

## 4      QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

show how justly he could appraise the work of his predecessors. His ideal and model was his great-grandfather who, in 1640, inherited, not a kingdom, but the Electorate of Brandenburg and the Duchy of East Prussia. The Thirty Years' War was then in progress. In the course of their marchings and counter-marchings, the contending armies had ravaged the Electorate until, in the words of Frederick the Great, "it had become a frightful desert, in which one recognised the sites of the villages by heaps of ashes that prevented the grass from growing".

Frederick's great-grandfather speedily gave evidence of the capacity for state-craft and military organisation which gained him the title of "the Great Elector". His reign lasted nearly half a century. Long before its close the wasted country was more flourishing than it had ever been. One of his first measures was to raise a considerable fighting force, and any attempt to invade his dominions was vigorously repelled. He clearly realised that a State with no continuous barrier of sea or mountain range, and surrounded by possible enemies, must be, before all things, a military State. Moreover, his familiarity with the difficulty of guarding his scattered possessions made him eager to seize every opportunity of consolidating them by the acquisition of fresh territories. The policy thus initiated by him commended itself to his successors. So long as it was followed up intelligently the country prospered. When it was slavishly adhered to, disaster ensued.

The Great Elector's most famous military exploit was the defeat of the hitherto invincible Swedish army. Thereby he established his right to a position of eminence among the potentates of Europe. At his death he left behind him a country that was a kingdom in all but name, and, though this was not yet generally recognised, a country that was on the way to become the champion Protestant State of Germany, and, therefore, a formidable rival to Austria, the strong Catholic power in the south of the Empire. The reign of the Great Elector was regarded as something altogether exceptional. Had his remarkable qualities been transmitted to his son and successor, it is doubtful if the Emperor would have suffered the latter to assume the title of King Frederick I. of Prussia.

By this step the new monarch did not forfeit the name and privileges of an Elector. He remained a member of the committee of seven princes who, on the death of an Emperor, assembled at Frankfort-on-the-Maine to choose his successor. Ever since the Reformation, the election had been little more than a formality. Since no Protestant prince could be nominated, the title of Emperor had become virtually hereditary in the Hapsburg dynasty. But nothing would have induced the Electors to forego this opportunity of extorting concessions from each new claimant of imperial honours. When he had complied with their demands, his coronation took place at Frankfort.

## 6      QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

The Empire of which he thus became head was the so-called Holy Roman Empire—a shadowy survival of the mediæval alliance of the spiritual and temporal powers of Western Christendom. This alliance was inaugurated on Christmas Day, 800, when Charlemagne was crowned Emperor at Rome by Pope Leo III.

On the extinction of the dynasty of Charles, the Empire came to be identified with the elective monarchy of Germany. But no ruler could adequately discharge the office of local king and universal emperor. Consequently “the German kingdom broke down beneath the weight of the Roman Empire. To be universal sovereign Germany sacrificed her own political existence. The necessity which their projects in Italy and disputes with the Pope laid the emperors under of purchasing by concessions the support of their own princes, the ease with which in their absence the magnates could usurp, the difficulty which the monarch returning found in resuming the privileges of his Crown,”<sup>1</sup> these were among the causes whose steady action undermined the authority of the king, established that of the nobles and prevented national consolidation.

The Reformation movement followed by the Thirty Years’ War dissociated the Protestant States of Northern Germany from the Catholic States of

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*.

the South. “The Treaty of Westphalia, by which, in 1648, that war was brought to a close, practically confirmed and ratified the dissolution of the German kingdom, by giving every German potentate the right to form at pleasure offensive and defensive alliances. . . . Each petty prince was master in his own State, with the right to tax, to impose custom duties, to stop exportation and importation of commodities, to coin money and to debase the coinage, to ruin his subjects in the endeavour to beggar his neighbours, or to sell them, like sheep appointed to be slain, for the armies of foreign potentates. . . . Add to this, that in tastes, ideas, habits, nay even in speech, the rulers of Germany—the same must be said of the nobles—had ceased to be German. . . . Louis XIV. of France was the type of manhood to which all eyes were admiringly turned. There were few German princes who did not set themselves to imitate, however awkwardly, his personal deportment and his private vices, his tyrannical oppression of his subjects and his shameless perfidy towards his neighbours. Exceptions indeed there were: the Great Elector of Brandenburg was conspicuous among them. But such was the dominant tone of the German courts; and there were over three hundred of them, fastened like vampires on the prostrate body of Deutschland.”<sup>1</sup> Hopeless indeed was the outlook until “Deutschland found Prussia”.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, July, 1891. An article on “The Making of Germany”.

## 8      QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

The second King of Prussia was the Great Elector's grandson, Frederick William I., a man of considerable ability, with a passion for developing to the full the military resources of the country. He had only himself to thank if the services he rendered to the State were often overlooked, while his name became a byword amongst his contemporaries for the parsimony which would resort to any expedient in order to cut down expenditure, and for the violence of temper which made his domestic rule a very reign of terror.

Frederick William died in 1740, and Frederick II. succeeded to the throne, to a full treasury and a very efficient army. It was known that he had latterly devoted attention to the details of civil and military affairs, but there was nothing to indicate that the most brilliant reign in the history of Prussia had begun. The new sovereign had indeed acquired a certain reputation as a man of culture. He was a skilled musician. His knowledge of French literature amounted to scholarship. His wit made him the life and soul of social gatherings. It was generally expected that he would make his position a stepping-stone to a life of ease and refined pleasure. But, from the outset, he seems to have recognised the responsibility of kingship. He became, as he himself said, "the first servant of the State," or, as Carlyle expressed it, "the one crowned reality in an age of lying". In the beginning of his reign he abolished legal torture and restrictions on religious

worship and on the freedom of the press. His subjects were at liberty to criticise him and his proceedings as much as they liked provided they did not interfere with his determination to *do* as he pleased.

A few months after Frederick's accession the Emperor Charles VI. died; and, in accordance with the terms of the Pragmatic Sanction, his daughter, Maria Theresa, succeeded to his hereditary possessions. Frederick II. had professed his willingness to abide by this agreement for keeping intact the heritage of the Hapsburgs. But where his country's interests were concerned, he was not troubled by inconvenient scruples. He remembered that, once upon a time, Brandenburg had had claims to certain estates in the Austrian province of Silesia. He determined to revive them. A communication to this effect was sent to the court of Vienna. But the King hardly waited to assure himself that no reply would be forthcoming before he proceeded to occupy Silesia with Prussian troops. This was the signal for the outbreak of the great War of the Austrian Succession. For Frederick was not the only potentate who would fain have participated in Maria Theresa's inheritance. He was, however, the most successful in accomplishing his purposes. A series of victories brought him renown as a military commander and eventually forced Maria Theresa to cede to him the coveted province. Under his fostering care it became the most remunerative portion of his own dominions.

## 10     QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

During the peaceful years that followed the war with Austria, Frederick threw himself, heart and soul, into the task of remodelling the government of his kingdom and of developing its internal resources. The people learned to trust the ruler who never spared himself in their service and who was accessible to the least of his subjects. His methods worked admirably so long as he was at the helm himself. But they were fraught with danger to his successors. "He was not content with being his own prime minister : he was his own sole minister." The heads of the various departments were little more than clerks carrying out his orders. There was therefore no security for the satisfactory working of the machinery of government if the directing hand were withdrawn.

The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was the outcome of Maria Theresa's determination to take vengeance on Frederick and to recover Silesia. She expected to gain her ends by allying herself with France, Russia and other Continental powers. The result was a life-and-death struggle for Prussia—a hopeless struggle had the military forces of the country not been under the leadership of a general like Frederick, whom Napoleon justly describes as "great especially in critical moments". Against the united hosts of his adversaries the King could not hope to prevail. He therefore set himself to frustrate their attempts to combine. Succeeding in this, he was able to vanquish them one by one. At the end





FREDERICK THE GREAT  
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY GEORGE VAN DER MYN

of the day he issued from the contest with undiminished territory, with an assured position for Prussia among the great Powers of Europe, with lasting fame for himself, and with an army which had proved more than a match for the legions of Austria, Russia and France.

Judged from the military standpoint, the defeat of the French at Rossbach (5th November, 1757) was not the greatest of Frederick's victories, for "it was gained over an incapable general and a disorganised army; but the moral effect which it produced was immense." All his preceding triumphs had been triumphs over Germans, and could excite no emotions of national pride among the German people. But the news of the battle of Rossbach stirred the blood of the whole of the mighty population from the Alps to the Baltic, and from the borders of Courland to those of Lorraine. Never since the dissolution of the Empire of Charlemagne had the Teutonic race won such a field against the French. The fame of Frederick began to supply, in some degree, the place of a common government and a common capital. It became a rallying point for all true Germans. . . . Nor were the effects produced by that celebrated day merely political. The greatest masters of German poetry and eloquence have admitted that, though the great King neither valued nor understood his native language, though he looked on France as the only seat of taste and philosophy, yet, in his own despite, he did much to

## 12     QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

emancipate the genius of his countrymen from the foreign yoke.”<sup>1</sup> He certainly created a public capable of preferring a national drama like Lessing’s *Minna von Barnhelm* to Italian opera or weak imitations of French plays. Lessing was a German of the same militant type as Frederick himself. “By his dramas, his incessant criticism”—especially his criticism of Voltaire—“his controversies in literature, art and theology, he awakened in the national mind a spirit of genuine freedom, a thirst for intellectual achievement of enduring excellence. He cleared and ploughed the soil on which his successors cast their fruitful seed.”<sup>2</sup>

Lessing was not, however, the only founder of a new and national culture. With his name must be associated those of Kant and Winckelmann. In the philosophy of Kant his compatriots found a very effectual antidote to the rationalism which was so marked a manifestation of the spirit of the age. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant deals with the limits of the human understanding, showing that when theoretical knowledge is based on reason alone, it can just as readily be demolished by reason. The *Critique of Practical Reason* is a statement of the positive side of Kant’s system. “His moral philosophy may be summed up in the one word which he found well-nigh forgotten—Duty. . . . It is not easy to overrate the salutary influence of Kant’s teaching.

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay’s *Essay on Frederick the Great*.

<sup>2</sup> Sime, *Life of Lessing*.

It was a generation formed by it who, in 1813, marched under the banner of Prussia to free their country from the French yoke."<sup>1</sup>

The popular exponent of Kant's transcendental philosophy was Schiller, and the new-born spirit of German nationality was nourished on the writings of Schiller and his followers. On Goethe the influence of Kant was less marked than that of Lessing and Winckelmann. In his *History of Art*, Winckelmann appears as the interpreter to his countrymen of the life and thought of ancient Greece. Like Ruskin, he was not only an art critic but a writer with a singularly attractive style—one of the first masters of German prose.

When Princess Louisa of Mecklenburg came into the world, Lessing's labours were nearly over. The earlier works of Goethe and Schiller had already appeared. Their masterpieces were to constitute the literary landmarks of the years to come. But since Frederick the Great had found his intellectual ideal in Voltaire, it was not to be expected that the lesser German rulers would readily abandon their traditional preference for the language and literature of France. Some few princes, however, amongst them the famous Duke of Saxe-Weimar, had been moved by the spirit of the new age, and realised something of the greatness of the writers to whom they extended a welcome. Their courts

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, July, 1891.

## 14     QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

became centres of enlightenment for the whole country.

More than twelve years had gone by since the Seven Years' War had been brought to a close by the Treaty of Hubertsberg. During that period the chief political event, so far as Prussia was concerned, was the first partition of Poland in 1772. Though from the standpoint of political morality this high-handed proceeding was akin to the seizure of Silesia, Maria Theresa consented to share the spoil with Frederick the Great and Catherine II. of Russia. Frederick derived the greatest benefit from this transaction; for he secured the Polish provinces which had hitherto separated Brandenburg from Prussia proper.

By 1776 the French had had time to realise how suicidal had been the policy of allying their country with Austria. France had been forced to cede to Prussia the position of leading military Power in Europe. Moreover, she had been unable to take part in the continental struggle without neglecting her interests in India and Canada. In both countries she had been superseded by Britain. For George II.'s espousal of the cause of Frederick the Great had made it possible for the British to attack the allies of Maria Theresa wherever any advantage was to be derived from such a course. The French people never forgave their rulers for the humiliations of the Seven Years' War. When Louis XVI. ascended the throne in 1774, there were indications

that the deluge foretold by his predecessor could not be much longer averted. The war that ultimately involved the whole of Europe and gave Napoleon his opportunity, was, in the first instance, the war with Austria into which the French Revolutionists plunged so eagerly. To their ill-fated Queen, the daughter of Maria Theresa, they contemptuously referred as "the Austrian woman".

The masterly portraits of Burke and Carlyle, together with a host of less vivid delineations by writers of history and fiction, have made the name of Marie Antoinette familiar as household words in lands where English is spoken. For lack of similar presentment the equally lovely and fascinating Louisa of Prussia is still, in those same lands, comparatively unknown. But we have to consider that Marie Antoinette's part in the great revolutionary drama was played while the scene was limited to the city of Paris, and there was therefore no great difficulty in distinguishing the leading performers as they made their exits and their entrances. By the time Queen Louisa comes forward prominently, everything has changed. The stage comprises the whole of Europe and is dominated by one actor of consummate ability—Napoleon Bonaparte. One crowded scene succeeds another with such bewildering rapidity, that it is impossible to follow the movements of characters who, in a lesser arena, would not have missed their guerdon of praise.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD

THE first Hanoverian residence of Prince and Princess Charles of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was a one-storied villa in the outskirts of the capital. It continued to be a favourite summer resort long after their occupation of the electoral palace. Nor is it surprising that they preferred the more modest abode. The palace was not without a certain stately magnificence of its own. But it opened directly on to the dark, narrow Leine Strasse, and its associations were yet more depressing than its situation. Within its precincts Count Königsmarck, the friend and reputed lover of the hapless Sophia of Zell, had been both murdered and entombed. Across its threshold Sophia herself had passed in eager haste to shake from her feet the very dust of Hanover. Only, however, to be caught in the toils of her enemies and to spend in captivity the remaining two and thirty years of her life; only to hear afar off that her husband had succeeded to the British crown on the death of Queen Anne.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See W. H. Wilkins, *The Love of an Uncrowned Queen*.





THE FATHER AND MOTHER OF QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER A PAINTING IN THE HOHENZOLLERN MUSEUM, BERLIN

## CHILDHOOD AND GIRLHOOD 17

This house of ill-omen is now known as the birthplace of Queen Louisa. It was a strange background for her happy child life, but all things else about her seemed "drawn from May-time and the cheerful dawn". Her singular power of winning affection asserted itself from the first. Had she been the wished-for son and heir, her father could hardly have been more assiduous in securing an imposing list of sponsors. Among them were her maternal grandmother, and her cousin, a daughter of George III. In honour of the British princess she received the second of her four names —Louisa Augusta Wilhelmina Amelia.

An attractive portrait of Princess Charles of Mecklenburg represents her holding up the picture of a baby girl. This was formerly believed to be an early likeness of the little Louisa. In a way it may still be regarded as such. For Louisa certainly resembled her sister Charlotte, the original baby of the picture. A very slight comparison of family portraits makes it evident that it was from the Hesse-Darmstadt side of the house that Louisa and her sisters inherited their remarkable beauty. To the fact that their father was not a reigning prince they owed the further advantage of being born, not into the rigid formality of a court, but into a home. Under the kindly rule of their parents the young natures expanded freely. As the domestic circle widened the two elder girls, Charlotte and Theresa, had their pursuits and interests in

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common. Louisa's comrades were the younger children, her sister Frederica and her brother George.

A certain lack of cordiality on the part of their paternal relatives at the court of Neu Strelitz was made up for by much friendly intercourse with their mother's family. Princess Charles was not the daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt but of his younger brother, Prince George William. The latter resided in the Old Palace at Darmstadt with his clever energetic wife, a born princess of Leiningen, his son George and his unmarried daughter Charlotte, the favourite aunt of the Strelitz children. Occasional visits and frequent lengthy epistles kept the two groups of relations in touch with one another. Towards the close of the year 1780 the Darmstadt group spent several months in Paris. To Hanover came the news of their gratifying reception at the court of Versailles, and of the kindness shown to them by the young Queen of France. Nor were they forgotten when the visit was over. The letters of Marie Antoinette to Princess Charlotte of Hesse-Darmstadt are a touching revelation of disinterested friendship. One of the first of these communications is a message of sympathy on the occasion of the death of Prince George William in June, 1781.

In the homes at Hanover and Darmstadt this was but the beginning of sorrow, for Princess Charles did not long survive her father. She

died in May, 1782, after giving birth to an infant who only lived one day. Her daughter Louisa was little more than six years old at the time, yet the memory of that early bereavement remained with her through life. In her girlish days her time and pocket-money were freely expended on any child of whom she could say, "She is like me, she has no mother". The motherliness which was to become so marked a feature of her own character, was developed by efforts to fill in some measure the empty place in the lives of the younger members of the family. Not that the children were neglected in any way. They remained under the charge of Fräulein von Wolzogen, their governess and the personal friend of their mother. The Leine palace had become a more cheerless abode than ever. It was accordingly abandoned in favour of Herrenhausen, the suburban residence of the Electors. Many happy hours were spent by the children in the gardens and orangeries of this miniature Versailles. Here the old Electress Sophia<sup>1</sup> had spent her happiest days. Here, in the summer of 1714, she suddenly passed away, missing by a scant three months her heart's desire of having "Queen of Great Britain and Ireland" inscribed upon her tomb.

Herrenhausen was the home of the Strelitz family for two and a half years. During this

<sup>1</sup> The mother of George I. of England.

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period the great event of Louisa's life was her first visit to Darmstadt. To his late wife's relatives Prince Charles turned instinctively for sympathy in his loneliness and advice as to the upbringing of his motherless children. When it was announced that he was about to marry his sister-in-law, Princess Charlotte, her nephew and nieces naturally regarded it as a delightful arrangement. In the autumn of 1784 they were all present at the wedding in Darmstadt, and there the entire family remained till the spring of the following year.

It may be assumed that they had some intercourse with the reigning prince, Landgrave Louis IX., though he seldom visited his capital. As a young man he had joined the Prussian army, but his career in life was spoiled when his father, a staunch adherent of the House of Austria, insisted upon his relinquishing the service of Frederick the Great. The future Louis IX. was not a man who could follow the parental example, and forgot disappointments in the pleasures of hunting, or in driving a chariot drawn by six white stags. He was before all things a soldier; and, when he succeeded to the headship of the State, he promptly set to work to make his troops as efficient as possible. His days were spent in the society of his officers, and usually at a distance from Darmstadt. For a time his gifted wife, Caroline of Zweibrücken, acted as regent. She, too, had come under the influence of Frederick the Great and was as much

impressed by his mental abilities as her husband had been by his military genius. Nothing afforded her greater pleasure than a visit to Berlin. In the intervals she kept up a correspondence with the Prussian monarch, and her daughter Frederica became the much-enduring wife of his nephew and successor.

Under the auspices of Caroline, "the Great Landgravine," Darmstadt became a centre of attraction to philosophers and literary men. She died in 1774, and was buried in the gardens adjoining the palace. Her monument is an ivy-covered mound, which forms, as it were, the pedestal for a memorial urn sent by Frederick the Great, bearing the inscription, "*Femina sexu, ingenio vir*". Her place as leader of Darmstadt society was taken by Louisa's grandmother, Princess George William. Consequently the latter was often referred to as the Landgravine Marie, though, in her case, the title was purely complimentary.

The youngest daughter of Louis IX. and Landgravine Caroline was the wife of Carl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar. In December, 1784, the Duke visited Darmstadt, and it was arranged that Schiller should come from Mannheim to meet the friend and patron of Goethe. Though barely nine years old, Princess Louisa seems to have been present when the poet read the first act of *Don Carlos* to the assembled court. This was the beginning of her lifelong delight in Schiller's poetry and Schiller's

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prose—the beginning, therefore, of her appreciation of German as a literary language.

During the sojourn at Darmstadt another marriage was under contemplation—that, namely, of Louisa's sister Charlotte to the reigning Duke of Hildburghausen. Full of plans for the future, Prince Charles, with his wife and children, returned to Hanover. Charlotte's wedding took place in September, 1785, and Fräulein von Wolzogen accompanied the fifteen-year-old duchess to Hildburghausen, there to remain in the capacity of mistress of the household.

Two months after this event the home in the Electoral Palace was again left desolate, for the second Princess Charles did not long survive the birth of a son, who was named after his father. The sorrow of the widower was mingled with an anxiety about the welfare of his family, such as he had not felt after the death of his first wife. The elder girls especially had need of sympathy and guidance. But the new governess, Mademoiselle Agier, lacked the kindly disposition of her predecessor. Moreover, she had fixed ideas about the conduct of princesses, and her pupils were discouraged by constant fault-finding. Their grandmother had their interests very much at heart. But she was out of reach. Since the death of her husband, the Old Palace had belonged to her favourite son, Prince George. He was, however, unmarried, and his mother continued to preside over the household. Another tie which bound her to her home was its

nearness to that of a surviving daughter, married to her cousin, the Hereditary Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt.

Prince Charles of Mecklenburg soon realised that there was only one way out of the difficulties which confronted him. He resigned his Governorship and made Darmstadt his headquarters. For the next few years his children remained under the care of his mother-in-law. When the lively girls and boys gathered about her, it must have seemed to Princess George William as if the shadow on the sundial had moved backward. It was so short a time since she had been taking thought for the upbringing and settlement in life of her own family. Nor was it wonderful that she dreamed of a brilliant future for her grand-daughters. They had no fortune and the age was one of rampant materialism. Still, it was always possible that their dower of beauty might outweigh more sordid considerations. In the case of Princess Theresa, this hope was speedily realised. At the age of sixteen she was married to the Hereditary Prince of Thurn and Taxis, who, for her sake, had turned a deaf ear to ambitious relatives wishful to procure for him a wealthy Italian bride.

Thus, though Theresa shared for a time in the educational advantages of her sisters, it was the younger princesses who received the full benefit of their grandmother's careful system of training. She was certainly in advance of her age in holding that children may learn all that is needful without being

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made miserable. "That reminds me of grand-mamma remonstrating with Mademoiselle Agier," said Queen Louisa to her husband when, in reading Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, they came to the passage beginning :—

Denn wir Können die Kinder nach unserem Sinne nicht  
formen;

Sowie Gott sie uns gab, so muss Man sie haben und lieben.<sup>1</sup>

With Mademoiselle Agier remonstrances proved unavailing. She had, therefore, to take her departure. In her stead appeared a governess of Princess George William's own choosing. This was the dearly loved Mademoiselle de Gélieux, daughter of a Protestant clergyman at Neuchâtel. From the time of her arrival until their marriage (in the case of Louisa and Frederica a period of seven years), the young Strelitz princesses spent most of their time in the society of their grandmother and governess. Since both were women of exceptional nobility and refinement, this was beyond all doubt the most valuable part of their education. On its intellectual side the Darmstadt system was neither better nor worse than that of any other court. But it was rare to find due emphasis laid on the formation of character, and due appreciation of the charm of a perfectly natural manner. It delighted the grandmother that

<sup>1</sup> For we cannot mould our children according to our own ideas;

Just as God gave them to us we must receive them and love them.

her young charges had inherited the vivacity and light-heartedness of the southern Germans, but she insisted that the fun should always be good-natured. She had no liking either for the practical jokes of the Weimar court or the cynicism of that of Berlin. In what has been termed "the legend of Queen Louisa," there is many a story which testifies to the pure and bracing quality of the atmosphere of her early environment. She and her sisters were not suffered to grow up in utter ignorance of the hardships that beset the labouring classes. When they accompanied their grandmother to Braunshardt, a delightful country house a few miles out of Darmstadt, or to her own property of Broich, near Düsseldorf, they were encouraged to interest themselves in the poorer tenants on the estates. In cases of distress they gave such help as was within their means. To prevent Princess Louisa from exceeding these moderate means was evidently a matter of some difficulty. In her eagerness to respond to any appeal to her feelings of compassion, she was ready to part with everything she possessed, even to the shoes upon her feet. For a long time admonitions about making almsgiving a matter of consideration rather than impulse seemed to be thrown away upon her. At last there came a day when she was discovered borrowing money for some charitable purpose, and the sternness of her grandmother's reproof made a lasting impression on the little Lady Bountiful. Generous she remained to

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her life's end. But no one could bring against her a charge of extravagance, no one suffered that she might gratify her instincts. On the occasion of this memorable rebuke Princess George William doubtless spoke in German, as her custom was when she wanted to express herself forcibly. French she had acquired as the recognised medium of communication at courts. But she never made it a substitute for her native speech, or rather for her native Doric, since her thoughts clothed themselves most readily in the dialect of the Rhine Palatinate. Thus it came about that her grand-daughters were more at home in their mother tongue than most German princesses of the eighteenth century. At the same time French was the staple subject of instruction in lesson hours. Judging from their letters, Louisa and her sisters became fairly proficient in their use of the court language, that is to say, when they gave their minds to it. In familiar correspondence, however, and probably also in familiar conversation, they simply made use of the phrase that first suggested itself in either tongue.

Their relationship to several of the more important German sovereigns made it possible for them to acquire a certain knowledge of contemporary history by merely keeping their ears open. It was natural that they should take a special pride in their connection with the Prussian royal family. Amongst their elders the sayings and doings of Frederick II. were a frequent topic of conversation, and his

*Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg* may have been one of the school books of the young princesses. Louisa was between ten and eleven at the time of the great king's death—a time when all his heroic deeds were recounted in detail, and officers who had served in his wars might have been heard fighting their battles o'er again.

Even the distant principality of Neuchâtel, the homeland of Mademoiselle de Gélieux, belonged to Prussia. Her pupils were aware that it had once been an outlying territory of the House of Orange, and that it had passed into the possession of the Hohenzollerns through the marriage of the Great Elector to Louisa of Orange-Nassau. Of this Electress of Brandenburg Carlyle relates that "her life was busy and earnest; she was helpmate, not in name only, to an ever busy man. Her judgment was good and he liked to have it on the weightiest things. A princess full of beautiful piety, good sense and affection."<sup>1</sup> Her letters show that she was not without literary ability, and she was believed to be the writer of a favourite hymn beginning :—

Jesu, meine Zuversicht.<sup>2</sup>

For the future Queen of Prussia the story of the "Good Electress" had a special fascination. She often referred to the "other Louisa," finding in her example

<sup>1</sup> *Frederick the Great.*

<sup>2</sup> The translation of this hymn by Miss Winkworth in *Lyra Germanica* begins "Jesus, my Redeemer, lives".

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the stimulus that Frederick the Great had found in the example of the Elector himself. To such of the inhabitants of Darmstadt as had ears to hear, the memory of Louisa of Brandenburg was daily recalled by the wonderful chime of bells in the tower of the Landgrave's castle. Amongst other melodies it played the familiar musical setting of "Jesu, meine Zuversicht".

Throughout the early years of Princess Louisa's life, influences were at work which tended to make her thoughtful, but we shall look in vain for any hint of spiritual precocity. To prepare her for confirmation, she received religious instruction from a clergyman of the Lutheran Church. But she was less indebted to his precepts than to the consistent Christianity of her grandmother and Mademoiselle de Gélieux. The latter was descended from a Huguenot of noble birth, who had found in Switzerland a refuge from persecution. She had inherited the faith that is not to be moved by any trial or hardship. Unconsciously she sowed, in her pupil's heart, seed destined to spring up and bear fruit in a time of national calamity.

The life of Princess Louisa is the life of one who came to be regarded almost as the patron saint of Germany. But the religion of her youthful days might be described in modern phraseology as "the religion of healthy-mindedness". It was the religion of the young Pippa in Browning's poem, who goes about singing :—

God's in His Heaven—  
All's right with the world.

Her earlier portraits are sufficient evidence that there was no undue suppression of her buoyant nature. If she is not actually laughing, there is a roguish look in the big blue eyes, which tells how difficult it was to be serious for any length of time. Hers was a face that clearly reflected the prevailing mood. Much of her story might be learned by merely studying the series of her portraits in the Hohenzollern Museum at Berlin, and in the galleries of various German palaces. The written testimony of eye-witnesses points to even greater loveliness than is indicated by the efforts of any contemporary painter. The sculptured representations of Schadow and Rauch convey some impression of the stately beauty of her womanhood. But it would have needed the genius of a Romney to portray all the witchery of the young Louisa with her tall graceful figure, her exquisite face, her complexion which aroused the enthusiasm of Madame Le Brun, her laughing eyes and the sunny locks that "hung on her temples like a golden fleece".

She was never happier than when travelling about and seeing new places. In the course of journeys to visit various relatives and friends, she became familiar with many of the German States. The high-spirited young princess doubtless enjoyed the element of adventure inseparable from a journey by coach when German roads were little more than rough,

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uneven tracks with a tendency to pools of water in the middle. The most experienced coachman could never foresee the consequences of a sudden down-pour of rain.

When Louisa was fifteen she accompanied her grandmother on a visit to the Court of Holland. This was her most extensive experience of travel in early life. To the girl brought up far inland the sea was an unfailing source of delight. The impressions of this journey were eagerly recalled in after years when she came to read Schiller's *Revolt of the Netherlands*.

A special interest attaches to her visits to Frankfort-on-the-Maine. The first of these took place in the autumn of 1790, when Louisa, with her sister Frederica and her brother George, accompanied her grandmother to the imperial city to witness the coronation of the Emperor Leopold II.

The Frankfort burghers doubtless viewed with considerable apprehension the general upheaval incident to such an occasion. They knew full well that the city would be divided into seven districts, one for each Elector, and that they and their families would have to live anyhow, and occupy the smallest possible amount of space, so that their best apartments might be at the disposal of the Elector of their particular district. It was the young Frankforters who had the best of it at these times, with plenty to interest them, and unwonted freedom from restraint. Goethe's autobiography contains a graphic account of

the great event of his boyhood, namely, the coronation of Leopold's father, the Emperor Francis I. The ceremonies in connection therewith are fully detailed, from the appearance long beforehand of a mounted official, followed by four trumpeters, who went about the city announcing the forthcoming celebration, until the day of the procession to the Cathedral, and thence to the Roman Hall. Here the newly crowned Emperor presided at a banquet, with the portraits of his predecessors looking down on him from the walls.

Princess George William and her young companions did not, like Goethe, have the benefit of all the preliminary proceedings. But at the windows from which he had once looked forth, they sat and watched the busy life of the streets; and, from the lips of his mother, they heard about his doings past, present, and to come. For the Hirschgraben was in the district of the Elector of Hanover, and they were lodged under the roof of Frau Rath Goethe. Her husband was dead, and the poet had settled in Weimar. She, however, was as lively as ever, and ready to do anything for the entertainment of her young guests. Sometimes she would devise means of preventing them from being interrupted in the novel and delightful occupation of pumping water in the garden. Sometimes she would relate stories of bygone coronations, generally winding up with a reference to the ominous fact that, when the portrait of the new Emperor had found a place in the Roman Hall, there would be room for just one more. Her

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audience did not need to be reminded of the prophecy that, when the last space was occupied, the Empire would come to an end.

Prince George and his sisters often recalled their impressions of this happy visit to Frankfort. Their interest in Goethe, a not unfamiliar figure in Darmstadt society, may have originally been due to kindly recollections of his mother's hospitality. In 1792 they returned to Frankfort to attend the coronation ceremony of Francis II. This time more imposing quarters were assigned to them. But Prince George and Princess Louisa contrived to make their way to the Hirschgraben, greatly to the delight of their former hostess. They had many things to talk about, yet we may be sure Frau Goethe did not fail to mention that the last portrait would now be placed in the banqueting hall.

But it needed no utterance of the soothsayer to account for the general apprehension of impending changes. Amongst those whom the coronation had attracted to the old city on the Maine, the all-absorbing topic of conversation was the forthcoming despatch of an Austrian and a Prussian army to suppress by force the revolutionary movement in France. For the past three years it had been making headway, and the reins of government were now held by the Girondist party. The humanitarian sentiments of the Girondists led them to regard war as a sort of missionary enterprise. Eager to realise their dream of overthrowing the existing

governments of Europe and enabling the oppressed peoples to secure their rights, the Girondist Ministers compelled Louis XVI. to declare war against the young Emperor Francis, the nephew of Marie Antoinette. That was the chief event of the spring of 1792. But in this very month of July, there was extorted from the French King a further declaration of war against Frederick William II. of Prussia. The last-named ruler had incurred the hatred of the Revolutionists by reason of a declaration which he had issued in conjunction with the Emperor Leopold in 1781. The two monarchs hoped to intimidate the revolutionary leaders by announcing their intention of combining with other potentates to strengthen the French monarchy. As it happened, their action merely increased the difficulties and dangers which beset Louis XVI. and his consort. Ere long they were virtually prisoners in their own capital.

But while for these hapless representatives of royalty there was much sympathy amongst the upper classes of European society, the lower ranks were more inclined to sympathise with the Revolutionaries who had so boldly asserted the rights of man as man. On that day in the midsummer of 1792, as the imperial procession wound through the streets of Frankfort and passed into the cathedral, there was interchange of whispered surmises as to the possibility of a struggle between the old order and the new in other countries besides France. In Germany the new age was indeed to be ushered in

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by a period of storm and disaster. But between it and the age which was passing away, there would not be, as in France, a great gulf fixed. Past and future were to be linked together by the young Princess Louisa of Mecklenburg. To-day she might have passed unnoticed, had not her comeliness of face and figure prompted an occasional inquiry as to her origin. But after generations would unhesitatingly declare that the most interesting feature of that coronation ceremony was the presence under one roof of Francis II., in very truth the last of the mediæval Roman Emperors, and the girl of sixteen who was to become the mother of the first Emperor of modern Germany.

## CHAPTER III

### BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE

BIOGRAPHERS of Louisa of Mecklenburg have, as a rule, been fully alive to the dramatic possibilities of the story of her marriage. Like that of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*, it is represented as the outcome of such a fortuitous combination of circumstances as could only occur in time of war.

Turning from these romantic descriptions to the letters of certain members of the Mecklenburg and Hesse-Darmstadt families we pass, as it were, behind the scenes, and discover that, long before the eventful meeting of their young relative with her second cousin, the Crown Prince of Prussia, an alliance between them was regarded as a consummation devoutly to be wished. Nor were the friends of Princess Louisa content to build her a castle in the air. From her grandmother downwards they were ready to do what in them lay to transform it into a good substantial Hohenzollern castle. This being the case, one is inclined to believe that the hero and heroine were bound to meet sooner or later. As things fell out, their

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betrothal was intimately associated with the earlier phases of the French Revolution.

By bidding defiance to Prussia it was generally held that the Revolutionaries had sealed their own doom. For France was presently invaded by an army composed for the most part of troops disciplined and officered by Frederick the Great. They were accompanied by their King. But unfortunately he did not take supreme command. That was entrusted to the Duke of Brunswick, who goaded the enemy to fury by an injudicious manifesto and then showed himself incapable of the vigorous action which alone could have saved the situation. After cannonading a French army at Valmy, in Champagne, he fell back into winter quarters on the Rhine.

The skirmish at Valmy took place on 20th September, 1792. The day following the Legislative Assembly met in Paris and proceeded to declare a republic. The French troops pressed on to the Rhine with renewed vigour. By October, Frankfort and Mayence were in the hands of the revolutionary General Custine.

With the enemy in such close proximity, Darmstadt ceased to be a desirable place of residence. It was therefore decided that Princess George William and her grandchildren should betake themselves to the safe seclusion of Hildburghausen.

Very happy were their recollections of former

visits to this little Thuringian principality. Forests of tall pine trees kept it remote from the stir of the great world, but it was not without interests of its own. Both Duke and Duchess had literary tastes, and music also was a favourite relaxation. Duchess Charlotte's wonderful voice gained her the family pet-name of "Singing Lottie". At the Court of Hildburghausen Jean Paul Richter and other men of genius found a hearty welcome. Jean Paul goes into raptures over "the glorious Duchess with her beautiful childlike eyes, and countenance telling of love and charm and youth, with a motherly heart and the voice of a nightingale".

There was therefore nothing dull about the long winter evenings in the Thuringian forest. Louisa and Frederica did not miss the more exciting gaieties to which they had been of late accustomed at Darmstadt. For Louis IX. had been succeeded by Louis X., their uncle by marriage with their mother's sister, and the capital of the new Landgrave was becoming celebrated for the musical and dramatic performances in which he delighted and in which he and his relatives frequently took part.

In all such diversions Louisa joined with exceeding heartiness, especially when they were associated with dancing. This was the amusement into which she threw herself with the greatest zest and would not readily forego. Once we are told she was not ready to start for a ball at the time appointed by her grandmother, and the irate old

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lady drove off without her. Nothing daunted Louisa gathered up her skirt and sped through the streets to the scene of festivity, arriving triumphantly in time to enter the ball-room in the wake of her chaperon.

In spite of her natural enjoyment of social recreations, Louisa was never at any time wholly dependent on external pleasures. She had caught a glimpse of that wider culture, the pursuit of which was to many of her fellow-countrymen as the breath of life. At Hildburghausen there was frequent talk of the literature of the day—a literature containing much of “the precious life-blood of master spirits”. She was not, however, satisfied with listening to the opinions of others. She liked to get hold of the books discussed in her circle and study them for herself. If her reading was never very extensive, this was due rather to the circumstances of her life than to want of inclination. It had the merit of being thorough so far as it went. Some one was sure to be called upon to explain unfamiliar words or references. Her questions might provoke a smile; but, as she sagely remarks, “One must either ask for information or remain stupid”. If her education had done nothing more than inculcate a modesty which tended, not to self-depreciation, but to earnest endeavour after self-culture, it could hardly be described as a failure.

It does not appear that Princess Frederica shared all the aspirations of her elder sister. Still, they remained close friends, thinking of marriage with a

certain apprehension lest it should put an end to the companionship on which they had come to depend. They were unaware of the conferences between their grandmother and their sister Charlotte, at which there was animated discussion of their future. That of Princess Louisa gave rise to more immediate concern. If only the impressionable King of Prussia could see her, her relatives were confident that he would desire no other daughter-in-law.

With many friends at the seat of war, the Duchess of Hildburghausen and her guests had no difficulty in keeping themselves informed of the course of events. Welcome for more reasons than one was the announcement that Frankfort had been recaptured and was to become the headquarters of Frederick William II. With him were his two elder sons, young lads obtaining their first experience of war.

The recovery of the Imperial city was due to the combined action of Prussian and Hessian troops. The latter were commanded by the Landgrave, who was accompanied by his cousin, Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt, the adventurous "Uncle George" of Princess Louisa. The Hessian princes were naturally much in the society of their relative, the King of Prussia, and "Uncle George" determined to bring about a meeting between his nieces and the young heir-apparent. He was overjoyed when the French began to retreat across the Rhine; although, so far as the main purpose of the war was

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concerned, the success of the allies proved as disastrous as their reverses. Danton urged the revolutionary leaders to "throw down to the kings of Europe the head of a king". Louis XVI. was accordingly sent to the guillotine.

The news of his execution was received with consternation in Hildburghausen. It was indeed a relief to know that the terrible Revolutionaries were being driven out of the Rhineland, though they still overran Imperial States and portions of States on the left bank of the river. The Landgrave of Hesse stated that there was no longer any reason why his relations should not return to the Old Palace, and "Uncle George" was anxious that they should arrive before a prospective visit of the King of Prussia to Darmstadt took place. Further despatches announced that His Majesty had arrived sooner than was at first expected and had gone on to Frankfort. The would-be matchmaker then directed his mother and nieces to travel homeward by way of the imperial city. They would at least see something of the entertainments which were being given in honour of the Prussian King.

Thus it came about that in March, 1793, four days after the celebration of her seventeenth birthday, Princess Louisa set out for her most eventful visit to Frankfort. With her, as on former occasions, were her grandmother and youngest sister. This time their destination was the White Swan Inn, and it was given out that they were merely breaking

their journey at Frankfort. What befel on the day of arrival and afterwards is duly set forth in a letter despatched to Berlin by Frederick William himself. On 22nd March he writes : " It is some days since my last letter was forwarded, but I have had no time for correspondence. We have been occupied with a constant succession of fêtes, especially designed to honour the presence amongst us of distinguished strangers, namely, Princess George William of Darmstadt and her two delightful grandchildren, daughters of Prince Charles of Mecklenburg. The latter are as beautiful as angels. I saw them for the first time in the theatre, just before the play began. I was so overcome with admiration that I hardly knew what I was doing or saying when their grandmother presented them to me. I only wished that my sons could see them, and fall in love with them. Next day, however, the young people were introduced at a ball. The princes were simply fascinated. I did my best to let them see as much as possible of our fair visitors, that they might get to know them. As far as I can judge, the two angels are as good as they are beautiful. When we found that the princes were very much in love, we just settled the matter out of hand. The princesses gave their consent and the betrothal will take place in due course, probably at Mannheim. My eldest son will marry the elder princess, his brother the younger."

It was on this wise that Louisa and Frederica of Mecklenburg came, and saw, and conquered at

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Frankfort—not in one day as chroniclers, with an eye to dramatic unity, have asserted, but certainly in a brief enough space of time. The lively satisfaction of the family who, striving to get one vessel into port, had unexpectedly brought in two, is reflected in the following letter from the Duchess of Hildburghausen to her sister Theresa, Princess of Thurn and Taxis: "How I wish that I held you in my arms, my dear, that together we might render thanks to Divine Providence. Everything apparently conspired to put obstacles and barriers in the way of this most interesting acquaintanceship. Opportunities seemed fated to be missed. And in spite of all the 'in spite of's'—*malgré tous les malgrés*—here is more than we could have ventured to wish for. Just think how well everything has turned out. How delightful for the two—Louisa and Frederica—to be together as long as they both live. It is what they always desired. It is the sole happiness I envy them. Papa is looking at everything through rose-coloured spectacles."

So much for the friends on both sides. What of the man who was to be the husband of Princess Louisa?

At Darmstadt there is a charming portrait of the Crown Prince Frederick William as a child of from two to three years old. Full of life and merriment, he is scattering roses in his own path. "I shall reign again in him," said Frederick the Great, proud of his promising grand-nephew. The prophecy might



CROWN PRINCE FREDERICK WILLIAM OF PRUSSIA AS A CHILD  
AFTER A PORTRAIT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE GRAND DUKE OF HESSE-DARMSTADT



have stood some chance of fulfilment had the boy been brought up under happier auspices. "Unfortunately the beginning of his education was entrusted to one named Behnisch, a hypochondriacal dreamer tortured with misgivings about the sin against the Holy Ghost and with apparitions. Not till his sixteenth year did the prince get rational teachers; meanwhile he was left to emptiness, shyness, want of the habit of work."<sup>1</sup> And he made what for him was a fatal discovery, namely, that to evade rebuke it was best to say as little as possible and avoid acting on his own initiative. Even his later tutors were not men of outstanding personality. The young prince was carefully instructed in the art of war, but comparatively little was done to develop his sound understanding and good natural disposition. The vivacious child of the Darmstadt picture grew into a reserved, taciturn youth whose moral rectitude made him a singular contrast to the *habitués* of his father's court. His chief associates were Prince Louis, the brother nearest to him in age, and a certain General Köckeritz, who had been assigned to him as aide-de-camp. There was, however, nothing ennobling about the society of Köckeritz—a lazy, good-natured fellow capable of adapting himself to the young prince's moods, but incapable of giving him helpful advice on any subject whatsoever.

At the outbreak of hostilities with France, the

<sup>1</sup> Baron Stein. See Seeley's *Life and Times of Stein*, vol. i., p. 197.

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Crown Prince of Prussia, aged twenty-two, was a tall personable young man, with large melancholy dark blue eyes, and brown hair which he had the sense to leave unpowdered. At Frankfort, Princess Louisa saw him at his best. The excitement of his first campaign had roused him to unwonted energy, but the commendation won by him for conspicuous bravery could not render him oblivious to the suffering entailed by war. The horror of it remained uppermost in his mind, and tended to make him averse to take up arms, even when his quarrel was just.

From Frankfort he writes to his mother, herself a Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt : "I am very happy in the choice that I have made". One could wish that he had been even more enthusiastic about the engagement, which had given him, for the first time, a hopeful outlook on life. But not till long afterwards did he realise the exceptional worth of the woman who had promised to be his wife. That he loved her is beyond all question. Yet it must be conceded that he loved her for himself rather than for herself. It is doubtful if he ever perfectly understood her. But it did not take her long to understand him, to comprehend that his was a nature for which large allowance must be made. This she reveals quite unconsciously in a letter sent from Frankfort to her absent sister. "Just a little word for you, my dear and much-loved Theresa. You know all about it. Angel of my heart, let it make

no difference in your feeling for me. You cannot imagine, dear Theresa, how pleased I am. The Prince is extremely kind. He says what he means with no useless multiplication of words, and gives the impression of being extremely trustworthy. Since I like him so well, I have really nothing left to wish for. When, for example, he tells me that I am pleasing to him, that he thinks me good, I can believe it, for he has never said a flattering word to me yet." Despite the romantic background, the actual wooing must have been a trifle prosaic.

By the time Frankfort is left behind Princess Louisa is evidently convinced that what her lover chiefly lacked was confidence in himself. She seeks to encourage him by going over the catalogue of his virtues. "You are upright in character," she writes. "You are truthful and no flatterer. These qualities have an inexpressible value for me. Thanks to them, we know just where we are at once without any needless circumlocution."

Throughout the year 1793 the war with France was continued. Consequently the King of Prussia and his sons remained in the neighbourhood of the Rhine, and at no great distance from Darmstadt. There, in the month of April, the formal betrothal of the young couples took place. Once at least the princesses visited their future husbands in camp. This event has been recorded by Goethe, who was going through the campaign with the Duke of Weimar. The poet tells how he deliberately con-

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cealed himself in a tent that he might obtain a prolonged view of the two young girls, "who might have been taken for celestial beings visible for a moment amidst the tumult of war".

As the summer advanced, the fighting on the German frontier became more desultory, and the Prussian princes might often have been seen wending their way to Darmstadt. To share for a time the happy home-life of their betrothed was more than a pleasing experience : it was a revelation. Looking back on their own lives they could recall nothing of the nature of a home, only the dreariness of a court, only a mother who had so long been treated with indignity and neglect, that she took it very much as a matter of course. It speaks well for the young men that they were capable of appreciating the refining and elevating influences of a well-ordered household, and of determining that in their own establishments its attractive features should be reproduced. They were specially charmed with the way in which their Darmstadt relatives combined dignity of bearing with a minimum of ceremonious observance. At the Berlin court the laws of etiquette had become more stringent in proportion as the moral law was relaxed. It was a convenient method of cleansing the outside of the cup and platter. Though the Crown Prince had grown up in an atmosphere of restriction, he had long felt the irksomeness of the accepted code of manners. His own preference was for simplicity in all things, and

he was doubtless relieved to find that Princess Louisa only laughed at excessive formality. Under her influence he took to following his own bent, and became less afraid of expressing what he felt, though force of early habit prevented him from ever laying aside his stiffness of manner.

It is true enough, as he himself expressed it, that his life was on the whole "a life of unrest". But it was not without its seasons of calm weather, such as the summer and autumn of 1793, when the happy days were steeped in the sunshine and glowing colour of the Rhineland. He could look back to delightful expeditions into the region round about Darmstadt and further south to Heidelberg with its majestic ruined castle standing out against the wooded heights of the Neckar valley. It was during these wanderings that the young people who looked forward to lifelong intercourse came to feel at home with one another. As Louisa listened to the Crown Prince's reminiscences of boyhood, and realised the contrast between his surroundings and her own, she felt a strong desire to make up to him for all that had been lacking hitherto. In after years it becomes very manifest that, in her affection for him, the motherly element predominates. It is she who takes thought for him, rather than he for her. She stands between him and the limitations of his nature. Had it been possible, she would have stood between him and the troubles of his reign. Failing that, she set herself to cheer him in his moods of depression,

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and induce him to warm at least one hand before the fire of life.

The advantages of the marriage from the prince's point of view were not, however, taken into account in 1793. At that date it was generally maintained that the dowerless Princess of Mecklenburg had every reason to congratulate herself on her good fortune. As a Protestant she could hardly have done better than become the bride of the heir to the Prussian throne. Louisa herself was very appreciative of the honour that had been conferred on her. At the same time she must often have been led to ponder the responsibilities and possible dangers of her future position. Her restless uncle George had made his way into Paris during the summer. Under an assumed name he remained there for a time risking his head in vain endeavours to rescue Marie Antoinette. He returned much cast down at the failure of every attempt to release the unfortunate Queen. One day he announced that he had seen the White Lady, the traditional ghost of the Darmstadt Palace. His conviction that the apparition was a portent of the death of Marie Antoinette, was confirmed by the news of her execution on the sixteenth of October.

Contemporaries of the young Princess Louisa would probably have been much surprised had they known that her forthcoming marriage by no means occupied the whole of her attention. There is no reference to it in a letter written by her, on 28th

June, 1793, to Lichthammer, the clergyman responsible for her religious instruction. After asking him to procure her a copy of Moses Mendelssohn's *Phädon*, or the *Immortality of the Soul*, she continues in words instinct with the spirit of the German Renaissance : " My soul has an intense craving for culture. It longs to gather useful knowledge of the men and the literature of bygone ages. I never allow myself to be idle, but what does it profit my spirit to write an essay a month, to finish a pretty drawing or to study a beautiful sonata ? Such things as these distract me, but they do not increase my mental power. The body cannot be nourished by seeing and hearing, nor can the soul grow strong without definite matter of thought." Even without the testimony of Prince George of Mecklenburg to his sister Louisa's partiality for Herder, one might safely hazard a guess that the writer of this letter had been dipping into his recently published *Philosophy of History*. Her interest in the peoples of antiquity, combined with inability to make any distinction between the soul and the intellect, seems to indicate that the influences which were giving rise to the romantic movement in German literature had not passed her by. Amongst the most powerful of these influences we must reckon the writings of Herder.

What further efforts were made by the heiress of the ages to take stock of her inheritance during the summer of 1793, we have no means of ascertaining. Seeing that the days of maiden meditation were

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numbered, the probability is that she did not accomplish very much.

In the end of September, Frederick William II. returned to Berlin, leaving his sons with the army on the Rhine. The French Revolution had culminated in the Reign of Terror. Yet the allies had still but a half-hearted interest in the prosecution of the war. Both the King and the Emperor were absorbed in watching the course of events in Poland. There too a revolution had been in progress. Stimulated by the example of the French, the Poles had substituted constitutional government for the elective monarchy, which was simply another name for anarchy. This change took place in May, 1791, and the beneficial results thereof speedily became manifest. But a strong Poland was the last thing her enemies desired to see. Catherine of Russia sent an army to restore the old order by force. King Frederick William secured his own interests by secretly promising assistance both to the patriot Poles and to Catherine. When the latter gained the day, Prussia and Russia joined together to bring about the second partition of Poland in 1793. Thus the region known as Great Poland became South Prussia. Austria strongly opposed this act of depredation. It brought her no increase of territory and it intensified her jealousy of Prussia. In such circumstances effective action by a joint Prussian and Austrian army was hardly to be expected. In December, 1793, the campaign terminated ingloriously, and the French re-

occupied the towns of Worms and Spires from which they had been with difficulty ejected. But although the war had not resulted in a restoration of the French monarchy, it had given the Crown Prince of Prussia and his brother an opportunity of proving their mettle. They were received with acclamation on their return to their father's capital. Preparations for the double marriage had already commenced. It was to take place at Christmas.

In the intervals of his visits to Darmstadt, the Crown Prince received many touching messages from the girl who, in her quaint mixture of French and German, signed herself "soon to be your dear little wife Lousia"—*Bientôt Herzeliebes Weibchen Louise*. At one time she has heard disquieting rumours concerning Berlin society, and writes : "Assuredly there will be many a thorn on my path there. Do consider how young I am, how very inexperienced. At first I shall have no friendly adviser of my own sex, and, even later on, that may not be possible. Between ourselves, from what I have heard of the women of Berlin, I hardly think they are worthy of my friendship. The majority of them are mere coquettes, and you know how I detest coquetry. It leads on to vice of the most repulsive kind. And I venture to think that I have too much regard for what is right ever to feel differently about this, or to degrade myself by being on friendly terms with people who are addicted to such practices." On other occasions Louisa is full of anxiety lest she should fail in the discharge of her

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new duties and disappoint her lover. "A little forbearance on both sides and all will go well. I have my faults, and you scarcely know me yet. Be very forbearing with me. Do not demand too much from me. I am very undeveloped, very young. I shall probably make mistakes, but let us be happy notwithstanding."

Before returning to Berlin, the Crown Prince paid a farewell visit to Darmstadt and was able to reassure his apprehensive bride. "Since you were here for the last time," she writes, "I have been much less anxious. God will surely give me strength; and lead me, and never forsake me. My fervent prayers will move Him, and my religious principles will shield me from evil. Be quite sure that I love and honour you, that I will do everything in the world to please you. Be my stay and my friend and my counsellor. You will not find me ungrateful."

On the 13th of December the inhabitants of Darmstadt were astir betimes in order to catch a glimpse of the Princesses of Mecklenburg setting out for Berlin. In taking leave of the home of their youth, they took leave also of Mademoiselle de Gélieux, who was returning to her friends in Switzerland. Accompanied by their grandmother, father, and brother George, Louisa and Frederica went on their way, hearing above the farewell greeting of the people, the bells in the palace tower ringing out the melody of "Jesu, meine Zuversicht". It was as if the "Good Electress" were repeating her message

with special reference to the sisters whose journey's end was marriage with her lineal descendants.

The said journey occupied over a week ; for the travelling was all done in the daytime, and December days are short. The longest stoppage was made at Weimar. A day and two nights were spent under the hospitable roof of Duke Carl August and his wife, a sister of the Queen of Prussia and of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt. Once again at a turning point in her history Louisa of Mecklenburg will be found at Weimar. On the present occasion her likeness to her hostess appeared to be one of feature only. The years to come were to reveal other points of resemblance between them, including the ability to hold their own face to face with Napoleon.

It was after nightfall on 21st December when the eagerly expected travellers drove through the illuminated streets of Potsdam. At last they were on Prussian territory and only sixteen miles from the capital. At the entrance to the royal palace within the town, they were welcomed by the Crown Prince and his brother. The young men escorted their respective brides to the state apartments, and made them acquainted with the ladies and gentlemen who were henceforth to be in attendance upon them. As Mistress of the Household of the Crown Princess, the King had appointed Countess von Voss, the grandmotherly guardian of Louisa's married life. A girl of less tolerant disposition, and less experienced

in the ways of elderly people than the young Princess of Mecklenburg, might have resented the constant companionship and supervision of a woman of sixty-four, versed in all the niceties of court etiquette, and ready to look askance at the least infringement of the same. But Frederick William knew what he was doing when he made choice of the Countess for a position of great responsibility. Her loyalty and devotion to the Prussian royal family had often been tried, but never found wanting. She had the capacity for friendship that stops short of no sacrifice. Qualities such as these do not, however, manifest themselves superficially. On the surface she was an alarmingly punctilious old lady, though not devoid of tact. As the Crown Princess was likewise tactful, the first critical days of intercourse were got over safely. In course of time the two who were thrown so much together came to understand and thoroughly appreciate each other. If the Crown Prince's fascinating young consort kept her footing on the slippery path of life at the Prussian court, it was largely due to the watchful care of Countess Voss.

After a night's rest at Potsdam, the sisters were ready for the last stage of their journey and their state entry into Berlin. A sunny spring day seemed to have been borrowed for the occasion, and the roads along which the procession passed were crowded with spectators. A long way ahead of it rode the Crown Prince and Prince Louis. They were hurrying forward to receive the princesses on their arrival at the



Stich u. Druck v. A. M. Meyer Leipzig.

Siehe Gott, und für Bekehrung  
Ihnen danken, und ehrgeizig  
Sophia Grafine Voss  
wobei u. Sonnreite

PORTRAIT AND AUTOGRAPH OF COUNTESS VOSS



palace of the metropolis. At last the state carriage with its military escort entered the city by the Potsdam gate. Facing the mistresses of their respective households sat the sisters whose loveliness must have recalled to the onlookers the princesses of German legend and fairy tale. The citizens of Berlin had been enthusiastic enough over Frederick the Great. But he had a chilling way of suppressing any manifestation of their feelings. On this occasion, however, they were free to give vent to their enthusiasm, and they did it with a will. There was special anxiety to behold the future Crown Princess. A dense throng waited in the vicinity of a great triumphal arch, at the end of Unter den Linden, where a halt was to be made. When the long-expected carriage appeared, the door was opened that the leader of a company of little girls might stand beside the bride of the heir-apparent and recite a poem in her honour. As the last words were uttered Louisa was seen to lean forward and embrace the youthful spokeswoman. The crowd seemed to feel that this was her response to their welcome, and cheered more lustily than ever. As the carriage moved onward the Princess saw nothing but

A sea of worshipping eyes, a ripple of hands  
Claiming her theirs, lifting her to the height  
Of their hearts' throne—all fathers, brothers, friends.

The only jarring note came from the opposite side of the carriage. Countess Voss was remonstrating with

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Louisa for yielding to the impulse of the moment. The latter doubtless consoled herself with the reflection that in the next carriage were the father and grandmother who assuredly would not misunderstand her.

When the procession drew near the palace, the King was seen standing at an upper window. He was gratified to perceive that his subjects were as delighted as he himself had been with the first sight of "the two angels". On their arrival the Princes came forward to meet them, and conduct them to the rooms formerly set apart for the use of Frederick II. It was meet that these apartments should also be associated with Louisa of Mecklenburg, hereafter to be known as Louisa of Prussia, and the true successor to the popularity of "Vater Fritz".

In the audience chamber the Princesses were received by the King, who introduced to them the assembled ministers of State and divers distinguished generals. Then followed visits to the apartments of the Queen of Prussia and to those of the Dowager Queen, the widow of Frederick the Great. The new-comers had also to make the acquaintance of the younger brothers of their affianced husbands, Prince Henry and Prince William, and of their sister Augusta ; their elder sister Wilhelmina had married the Prince of Orange.

The next day but one was Christmas Eve. On that day of days in the German year, Princess Louisa was married to the Crown Prince of Prussia. The

people of Berlin were not behindhand in manifestations of loyalty. But, at the special request of the bridegroom, the money collected for the illumination of the city was set aside for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the soldiers who had fallen in the war. Illuminations out of doors were certainly superfluous on an evening when the citizens and their families were gathering round lighted Christmas trees. Two days later there were further festivities in honour of the marriage of Prince Louis and Princess Frederica.

On 22nd December, 1801, Louisa, then Queen of Prussia, writes to her brother George : "Do you remember that this is an anniversary day? How anxiously my heart was beating when I drew near the gates of Berlin, and received tokens of honour and welcome which then I had done nothing to deserve! Yes, my dear, it was a solemn hour for me when I was numbered amongst the citizens of Berlin, when also I was being torn away from all my dear ones. But I never regret that hour, for now I am inexpressibly happy here with a husband who is so kind to me and so upright in all his dealings."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CROWN PRINCESS

**I**N the early days of the Prussian monarchy, an imposing edifice in the neighbourhood of the royal palace had been set apart for the use of the heir to the throne. During his father's lifetime it had occasionally been occupied by Frederick the Great—a circumstance which made their town residence specially attractive to Princess Louisa and her husband. Adjoining it was the smaller abode of Prince and Princess Louis. That there was constant intercourse between the two households goes without saying.

The Crown Prince was overjoyed at being able to dissociate himself in some measure from the doings of the court. Only to a limited extent, however, was this possible. He and his wife had perforce to take a leading part in all social functions, commencing with the series of brilliant entertainments inaugurated by the double marriage, and ending with the carnival. On such occasions the observed of all observers was the beautiful Crown Princess. She would have been more than human if she had not begun by finding it delightful to be

the centre of attraction, to have every one apparently eager to win her favour. It was not to be expected that she should at once perceive the pitfalls to which she was exposed by her youth, her exuberant vitality and her pleasure in novel sensations and impressions. But disillusion was not long delayed. It came with the discovery that she could only hope to avoid mistakes by suspecting the motives of every one with whom she came in contact. For the court was divided into two hostile camps, and it was needful for her to walk warily if she would evade the risk of compromising herself by seeming to side with or against either King or Queen. This was difficult enough, but not so perplexing as having to guard against scheming politicians who had hitherto been baffled in their endeavours to make the Crown Prince the central figure of a third party. Men of this stamp had no hesitation in attempting to gain their end by trading on the inexperience of the popular young Princess. A German biographer has described Louisa as "drinking the wine of joy" at this period of her existence. If so, it was with the consciousness that it was largely adulterated. For all her light-heartedness she was often filled with longing for the peaceful family circle at Darmstadt, away from the atmosphere of intrigue and scandal, in which she often seemed a stranger to herself. Not even from her sister, the one remaining link to her childhood's home, could she obtain the sympathy she needed. The sixteen-year-

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old Princess Louis, with her somewhat shallow nature and considerable appetite for flattery, was enjoying herself at Vanity Fair, and could not comprehend Louisa's tendency to look behind the shows of things.

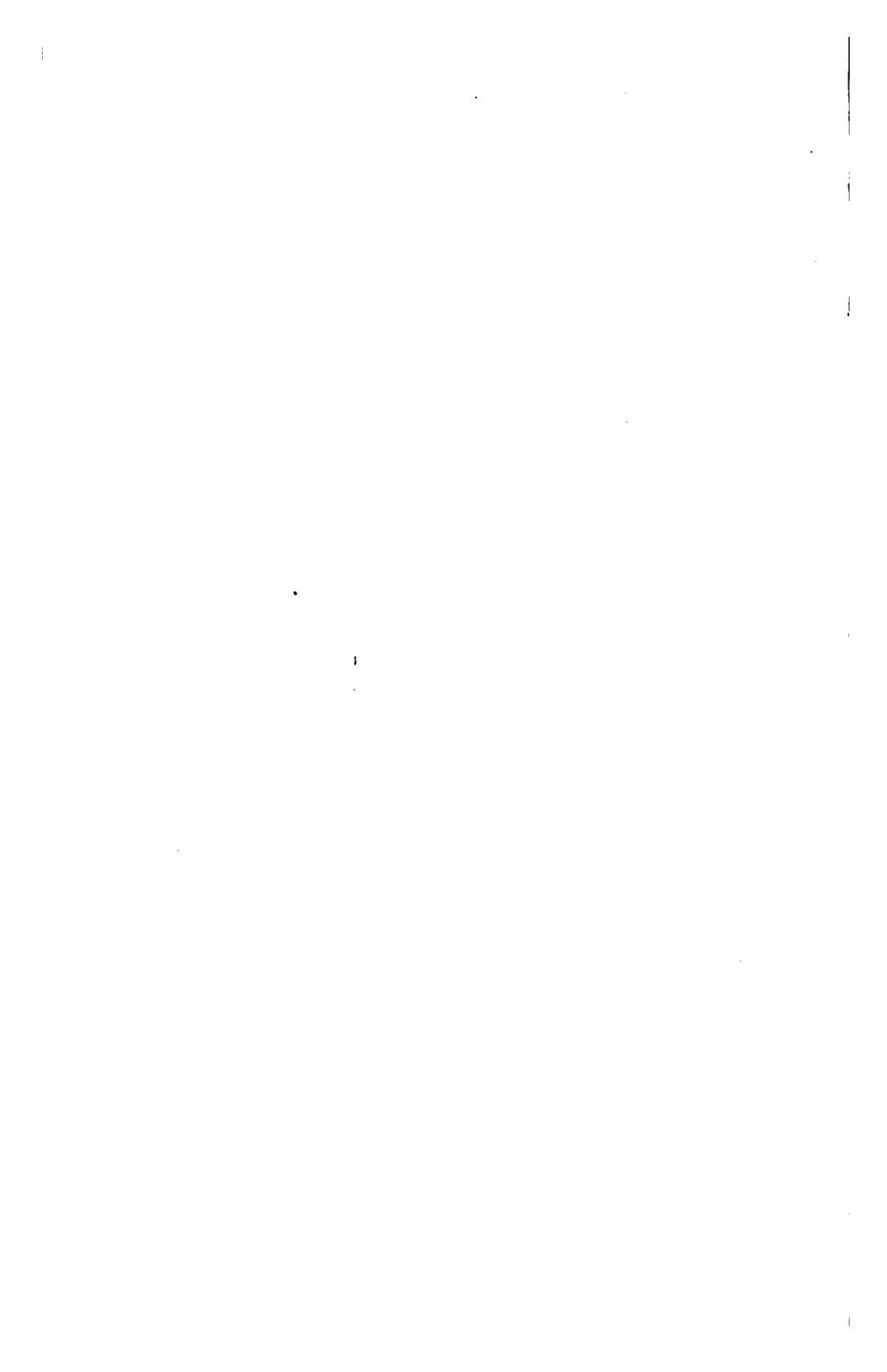
It was Countess Voss who first perceived that the untoward influences of the social environment of Frederick William II. were telling upon the Crown Princess. By the end of her first week in Berlin, the latter was a heroine to her Mistress of the Household. In her famous diary<sup>1</sup> the old lady writes as follows on 31st December, 1793: "The Princess is simply adorable, at once so good and so charming. The Crown Prince is a straightforward, worthy man. One is glad that he should have the rare happiness of such a marriage."

In the pages of her diary we see Countess Voss as she really was—affectionate, resourceful, reasonable, willing to wait any length of time rather than seek to force the confidence of the girl who had been confided to her charge, not willing that she should be suffered to struggle alone with difficulties and temptations. Left to himself the unobservant heir to the throne would hardly have associated inward conflict with the young wife whose liveliness was a constant source of wonder to him. Nor did he seem to note that his brilliant but dissolute young relative, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, was

<sup>1</sup> It was published under the title *Sixty-nine Years at the Prussian Court*.



CROWN PRINCESS LOUISA OF PRUSSIA  
AFTER A PORTRAIT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE GRAND DUKE OF HESSE-DARMSTADT



all too willing to assume the office of counsellor to the inexperienced Princess. But once Countess Voss had made him aware that his wife was feeling out of her element at court, he set himself to deal with a state of things he understood and could sympathise with. He took her away from Berlin to the unpretending residence of Sans Souci which Frederick the Great had built for himself at Potsdam. They arrived there in April when the terraced gardens and the neighbouring woods were full of the life and hopefulness of springtide. In more congenial surroundings the Crown Princess speedily recovered her personality. Her husband did his best to show her how to steer her course in her new position, and he was very responsive to her efforts to make his home-life happy. Regardless of ceremonious precedent, they used the familiar second person singular in speaking to one another. Indeed they would almost have forgotten that there was such a thing as ceremony, had not their Mistress of the Household, whom the Prince playfully nicknamed "My Lady Etiquette," felt it her duty to expostulate occasionally at their informal proceedings. But in her secret soul she was well pleased with the success of her intervention.

It soon became evident that the Crown Prince could make but a brief sojourn in Potsdam. The events which led to the third partition of Poland were in progress. Frederick William II. was preparing to take command of the Prussian army de-

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signed to assist the Russians in suppressing the Polish rising under the patriotic leader Kosciusko. With the King went his elder sons as a matter of course. It was arranged that the Crown Princess should spend the summer months at Sans Souci with her sister as companion. Her letters to her father and brother are full of references to the happy six weeks she had spent with her husband and of regrets for his departure. When he was no longer at hand to consult, she says : " I must now rely on the words of those who have a right to advise me and guard against people who harbour evil intentions, if not with regard to myself, then with regard to some member of my circle. In the latter case, they would fain make a cat's-paw of me. I have not been in Prussia long, but I have gone through a good many trials. They are helping me to estimate character very exactly. Yet I would much rather not have had such experiences. It would have been happier for me." The regret was natural. The fee for a training in diplomacy in the school for scandal is always a heavy one. Still, there can be no question as to the value of the lessons learned in the course of Princess Louisa's first season in Berlin.

During the summer of 1794 she was being prepared for her lifework in other ways. Never again in the course of her busy existence did she have such opportunities for quiet reflection. " I am all alone amongst utter strangers," she writes ; " I take

refuge in prayer, for wisdom and understanding." The answer to prayer for an understanding heart is a manifold blessing. Her whole nature was braced to meet the larger demands that life was making upon her. For the faith of her childhood there began to be substituted the maturer faith of her womanhood—a religion still without a trace of anything artificial or obtrusive, but clearly to be recognised as the keynote of her life.

When the unhappy Poles had been deprived of the last vestige of independence, the Prussian King returned to his capital and the Crown Prince and Princess resumed their residence in Berlin and their attendance at court. But, while they could not avoid contact with much that was evil and repellent, their social life was not without its agreeable episodes. Amongst the more pleasing reminiscences of Frederick William II. are those which illustrate his partiality for his daughter-in-law Louisa, "the Princess of all the Princesses," as he frequently called her, preferring her even to her sister Frederica. Their love of music gave them a strong interest in common. As a means of expressing the genius of the Germanic peoples, music was in advance of literature. The great writers were beginning to obtain general recognition. The great composers were already famous.

The Crown Princess had acquired a certain proficiency in playing the piano, the instrument which was gradually taking the place of the old harp-

sichord. And if her voice was not very powerful, it was sweet and true, and her singing had a peculiar charm of its own. The King was no ordinary judge of music and no ordinary player on the violoncello. In Frederick William II. Mozart found the most appreciative and generous of his patrons, and one who would have extricated him entirely from his pecuniary embarrassments if the patriotic musician could have been induced to forsake his post at the court of Vienna and settle in Berlin.

Their mutual fondness for history was a further bond between Princess Louisa and her father-in-law. Frederick William specially enjoyed her thoughtful comments on the rulers of the House of Brandenburg. On her eighteenth birthday, the first to be celebrated in Berlin, he gave her a residence of her own. This was the Palace of the Oranienburg, built and named for her favourite heroine, the Princess of Orange, who became the wife of the Great Elector. Louisa was delighted with this gift and with the consideration for her likings which had prompted it. It is related that the King asked in a general way if there was anything more that could be done to make her birthday happy. Whereupon she replied, "I would like a handful of gold to give to some poor people". When asked how large the handful was to be, she answered : "It must represent the largeness of the King's heart".

In the Oranienburg Princess Louisa and her husband spent more than one happy summer. But it was too large and too near town to satisfy the Crown Prince's craving for simplicity and freedom. Eventually he purchased the estate of Paretz, a few miles from Potsdam. Here he employed a builder to erect, in accordance with his instructions, "a dwelling suitable for a country gentleman of limited means". To Paretz he came with his family summer after summer. To play the local magnate gave him as much satisfaction as the making of locks afforded to Louis XVI. He and his consort interested themselves in the joys and sorrows of their tenants, and entertained them in princely fashion when the harvest festival came round.

Whether at Berlin or Paretz, the centre of attraction to Louisa was the little world of home, where the distinctions of rank were forgotten and she was simply wife and mother. Very intimate and tender were the relations between her and her children. Like Goethe and his mother, she and her two elder boys were "young together". In more than one familiar picture they are her sole companions. Both lads were regarded by their parents as sons of consolation. The elder of the two, known in after years as Frederick William IV., reconciled them to the loss of their first infant, a little girl. The birth of the younger child, Prince William, took place in March, 1797. It was the first joyful event that year in the

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Prussian royal family. Since the closing days of 1796, its members had known nothing but sorrow and anxiety; anxiety for the serious illness of the Crown Prince; sorrow for the untimely death, from typhoid fever, of his brother, Prince Louis, the husband of Louisa's sister Frederica. They had also been called upon to mourn for the passing away of the aged widow of Frederick the Great. The baby whose appearance under such circumstances was specially welcome, was one day to succeed his brother as King of Prussia. After 1871, however, that title was to be merged in the yet more important one of German Emperor.

As this same year drew to a close there was renewed anxiety about the health of the King. Not, however, till within a few weeks of his death was there any apprehension that his illness might terminate fatally. It was on 16th November, 1797, that Louisa wrote to her father: "The King died this morning at nine o'clock. We poor children can only weep for him now. May God in His mercy support my husband in his difficult task. It is far more difficult than any of us think." The letter in which these words occur is addressed to the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. To this title Prince Charles had succeeded on the death of his elder brother.

Frederick William II. left to his son a country at least a third larger than the Prussia of Frederick

the Great. The bulk of the new territory had been acquired as a result of the second and third partitions of Poland. But the authorities at Berlin had little reason to plume themselves on the extended frontiers of the kingdom. Their inability to administer effectively and develop the annexed provinces, made them a positive source of danger to the commonwealth.

The reign that came to a close in 1797 was marked by a gradual falling away from the lofty conceptions of civil government which dictated the domestic policy of Frederick II. It has been well said that "no sign of the decline of the country was more distinctly visible than the degeneracy of public men". The ministers who obtained office under Frederick William II. were, generally speaking, men able to bring influence to bear upon His Majesty by virtue of being, like himself, connected with the secret society of the Rosicrucians. No special gifts marked them out for preferment. Under their lax government, unscrupulous individuals wormed their way into positions of responsibility in the army and the civil service. To the evils resulting from this state of things, must be added those attributable to the example of the court which was peculiarly dangerous to public morals. "The King coupled unbridled profligacy with a rigid persecuting orthodoxy. The people who had learned from Frederick the Great to associate energy and heroism with irreligion, were taught by his successor to

associate religion with vice, misgovernment and disgrace."<sup>1</sup>

When Frederick William II. died, the country had been at peace for two and a half years. He was very reluctant to withdraw from the coalition against revolutionary France. Ultimately it had comprised all the great Powers of Europe, except Russia. But by the time the first campaign was over the Prussian treasury was empty. Thereupon the King applied to the Imperial Diet for subsidies to enable his army still to co-operate with those of the other Powers. When this request was negatived, Frederick William felt that, for the time being, he had no option but to retire from the contest and make the best possible terms with France. In one respect his foreign policy was in advance of that of Frederick the Great. He did not consider the advantage of his own country apart from the welfare of neighbouring States. By the Treaty of Basel (April 1796) a line of demarcation was drawn, not round Prussia alone, but round the States of Northern Germany, which the French undertook not to cross. This was a severe blow to the imperial system, for it interposed a barrier between the northern and southern portions of the Germanic Empire.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEW REIGN

**I**N a letter to Voltaire, written while he was still Crown Prince, Frederick II. informs his correspondent that he is curtailing the hours spent in his favourite literary pursuits in order to give more time to military exercises. "For," says he, "a man must catch the spirit of his calling." A more fervent admirer of the great king than Frederick William III. never breathed. He aspired to make his own reign a sequel to that of the national hero. Yet, for all his good intentions, the years only made it increasingly evident that he had failed to catch the spirit of his calling.

In so far as he was disqualified for success by lack of the mental endowments that make for distinction, he cannot be considered blameworthy. Extenuating circumstances may likewise be found in the story of the preliminary stages of his career. As in boyhood, so also in early manhood, the conditions under which he lived were repressive rather than educative. Between his father and himself it was impossible that there should be any degree of sympathy. The one was strong precisely where the other was weak.

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Conscious that his policy was frequently actuated by motives which would not bear close scrutiny, Frederick William II. took no steps to initiate his eldest son into the details of government.

The latter, however, came to the throne with one signal advantage. He had spent four years in the stimulating and inspiring companionship of Princess Louisa. They were years wherein he developed more rapidly than at any other period of his existence. In the happiness of his domestic life, his whole nature expanded. In becoming acquainted with his wife's varied interests and manifold charities, the range of his sympathies was widened. He began to reflect on the ultimate causes of distress amongst the people and to revolve schemes for its mitigation. His lack of self-confidence and of imagination made it impossible even for Louisa to spur him on to attempt great things. For a time, however, she certainly counteracted the tendencies in himself and his surroundings which inclined him to drift into merely respectable mediocrity.

The ceremony of swearing allegiance to the new King was associated with a religious service. "The throne is established by righteousness" was the text selected by His Majesty for the sermon to be preached on this occasion. Another monarch might have made choice of the same words for merely conventional reasons. Not so Frederick William III. They represented a genuine desire on his part that his rule should further the well-being

of the nation. His inaugural measures attested his sincerity. "Whatever in the former reign had been repugnant to good sense and good feeling he discerned as clearly as if he had not grown up in the midst of it. Everything scandalous disappeared at once. The ecclesiastical policy of the late sovereign was abandoned, the edict of religion approved by him was condemned with the comment that 'in the days before its enactment there was certainly more religion and less hypocrisy than now'. So far the King's plain good sense carried him."<sup>1</sup> But more than good sense was needed for the carrying out of those schemes of reform which he had of late years been contemplating. For example, his partiality for residing in the country had enabled him to take an intelligent and sympathetic interest in the condition of the peasantry. The Prussian State still rested on a feudal basis. "The nobles, the citizens, the peasants: these were the three castes into which the population, outside the professions, was divided; into one or other of them each person was born and in the same, as a rule, he died. To each caste was assigned its special pursuit. The noble cultivated his estate and exercised jurisdiction over the peasantry; he also served the king in civil or military office. The peasant cultivated his plot of ground, rendering fixed services to the lord. Between them stood the citizen, holding a monopoly of trades and industries which by law were

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein*, vol. i., p. 194.

confined, with few exceptions, to the towns. It is remarkable that the military profession was for the most part closed to him."<sup>1</sup> Thus, if a member of the middle class had no liking for trade, he could not acquire land and devote himself to agriculture. But he could, and often did, give himself unreservedly to the pursuit of learning or literature. Hence it came about that the unfortunate peasant, kept ignorant by force of circumstances, was looked down upon by the citizen, who also looked down upon the army because its ranks were recruited from the peasant class. The position of the peasant was, in fact, that of a serf, attached to the soil which he cultivated, impoverished by the exactions of oppressive landlords, and bound to join the army when called upon to do so, though his family might thereby be left without protection or means of subsistence.

To accord a certain amount of relief to the serfs on the royal domains at once suggested itself to the new King, but he did not see his way to introduce any scheme of emancipation which should apply to the whole country. Perhaps he can hardly be reproached for postponing the settlement of a question which involved not merely the welfare of the peasantry but the maintenance of the army. In other directions, however, reforms were urgently needed, and there was nothing to stay the hand of a capable ruler; yet the King's attempts to improve the condition of the people, the army and the

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*

finances were more of the nature of tinkering than a serious endeavour to cope with existing evils. Still, when we take into account that Frederick William III. was not naturally energetic, and that he vastly preferred the life of an ordinary land-owner to that of a king, the wonder is, not that he accomplished few of his aims, but that he did so much to prepare the way for more thorough reformers.

In his ignorance of the fact that adverse influences were at the bottom of most of his father's appointments, the young King retained many of the inefficient ministers whom he found in power. He placed in them a confidence they little deserved, and frequently deferred to their opinions against his own better judgment. But the crowning weakness of the reign, the want of a statesmanlike foreign policy, was undoubtedly the outcome of Frederick William's own inability to discern the signs of the times. When he took counsel with any one, it was with Count Haugwitz, the short-sighted politician whom his father had advanced to the office of Foreign Minister. The King and his adviser were equally averse to any renewal of the conflict with France. Neither of them grasped the significance of the course of recent events in that country.

On the surface indeed, it was not apparent that the year 1797 marked the beginning of a new reign in France as well as in Prussia. The people, weary of wars and revolutions, elected a majority

of royalists to the councils of the Directory. The Jacobin Directors were naturally alarmed and appealed for help to the young General Bonaparte, fresh from his first series of victories over the Austrians in Italy. To Bonaparte a restoration of the Bourbons would have been as fatal as to the Directors. He therefore despatched a body of troops to expel the royalist members and incidentally establish his own authority. Aware that it was not yet time for him to seize the supreme power, he took command of an expedition for the subjugation of Egypt as a first step towards the overthrow of British authority in the far East.

"We have seen how necessity had forced Prussia in 1795 to retire from the European quarrel. The neutrality which Frederick William II. had submitted to because he could not avoid it, was congenial to the new king's character. It suited at once his benevolence and his distrust of his own abilities. He raised it into a principle, and may be said to have based his foreign policy on the maxim that Prussia was not a great Power. In shunning the mistake of attempting to play too great a part in Europe, he ran to the other extreme, and seemed to wish to be a simple Elector of Brandenburg again, as in the days before the mighty Prussian army was created. What came of this rare political meekness, for which not the advice of any minister but the king's own personal disposition was responsible, we shall see."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*



QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER THE PORTAIT BY GRASSI



During the early years of the reign of Frederick William III. we must therefore conceive of Prussia as dwelling in peace within the illusive security of the line of demarcation fixed by the Treaty of Basel. Beyond its limits the countries of Europe, with few exceptions, were convulsed with wars and tumults. Kingdoms and empires rose and fell. But nothing could persuade the Prussian King to abjure the fatal policy of neutrality, nor convince him that he was simply leaving Napoleon free to ignore the northern kingdom with its reputed military strength until he had made his power supreme in all the adjoining countries.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE QUEEN AND THE PEOPLE. VISITS TO THE PROVINCES

A N interval of nine years separates the autumn when Louisa became Queen of Prussia from the autumn when she narrowly escaped being taken captive by Napoleon. This was the happiest and most brilliant period of her life. Until it closed in disaster, she had no suspicion that her husband's efforts to introduce order and uprightness into the conduct of public affairs had merely resulted in a process of veneering. From the masculine field of politics she was shut out by a thickset hedge of tradition. Women with a liking for intrigue might contrive to see over or through it. But Louisa was not of their number. In gauging the prosperity of the country she had, therefore, nothing to guide her but outward observation ; and that which met the eye was, for the most part, fair and full of promise. The practical abolition of serfdom in the royal domains added greatly to the King's popularity, and inclined his subjects to trust to him for the gradual bettering of their lot. Trade was, comparatively speaking, good. It was the golden age of German

literature. The troops acquitted themselves with credit at reviews and manœuvres. Only when extraordinary insight was combined with complete detachment from the royal circle, was it possible to discern that evils originating in other reigns were not being eradicated, that amongst the ruling and official classes, with which the King had most to do, deterioration was concealed from view but not arrested.

A time was coming when the rottenness of the State of Prussia could no longer be hidden from the Queen. Then, as she becomes involved in the struggle to avert national disintegration, we shall see how the latent forces of her nature were brought to light. Our present concern, however, is not with the years of political subjugation, but with the good years that preceded them—years wherein her character matured, as fruit ripens, in the sunshine.

Happy though she then was, Louisa remained singularly free from illusions with regard to her position. Sometimes she even declared that her life had been diverted from its natural course, and seemed to be looking wistfully towards heights of mental culture unattainable by conscientious queens. In other directions she found scope enough for her flamelike vitality. We feel its glow in all the outgoings of her affections and in her disinterested activities. It fitted her for the unconscious fulfilment of her appointed task. For to her, and not to her husband, it was given to supplement the work of Frederick the Great. To

her father-in-law Mirabeau had written : "Frederick enforced the admiration of men, but he never obtained their love. Yet, Sire, that love may be wholly yours." But enough has been said to show that a fleeting popularity was the utmost that could be achieved by Frederick William II., while there was more of respect than fervour in the undoubted affection of the people for his son. It was love for Queen Louisa that united the heterogeneous elements of the Prussian population and grappled them to the royal house with hooks of steel.

Seldom indeed has the consort of a military ruler had such opportunities of becoming known to her husband's subjects as the wife of Frederick William III. On public occasions and at State functions her courtesy, tact and ready utterance atoned for the King's lack of social gifts. Like those classic heroines who contrived to possess themselves of the girdle of Venus, her charm was irresistible. Young people of good standing, young poets and literary men, and most important of all, the rank and file of the community, were peculiarly susceptible to her influence. The first of these widely differing classes has amongst its spokesmen an English lad who subsequently became known as Sir George Jackson, the diplomatist. In 1802 he went to Berlin as *attaché* to his elder brother, the British representative at the Prussian court. Shortly after his arrival he writes to his sisters that "In society, amongst the younger men especially, there prevails a feeling of chivalrous de-

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votion to Her Majesty; and a sunny smile, or a glance of her bright, laughing eyes, is a mark of favour eagerly sought for. Such loveliness as hers few women are endowed with ; and she is as amiable and gracious as she is beautiful, full of vivacity, and enters with so much spirit and such apparent enjoyment into every amusement. But I must stop here, or you will think my head is turned, as many heads have already been, by the beauty and grace of Queen Louisa of Prussia."

Equally enthusiastic are the votaries of literature. Their pages afford many a glimpse of the Queen in her beauty and winsomeness. These references were helpful in making her known to the more educated portion of her husband's subjects. But her hold on the masses of the people was established by personal influence exerted in a constantly widening sphere. She accompanied the King on journeys to every part of the Prussian territories. And since he had little to say, and was usually absorbed in official business, it fell to his consort to respond to unpremeditated expressions of loyalty and generally to represent the popular side of the monarchy. Thus, in places visited by the royal travellers, it was the words and deeds of the Queen that were remembered until they became part of the local tradition.

The first of these state progresses was undertaken six months after the accession of Frederick William III. The Estates of Brandenburg did homage to the new ruler at Berlin ; but it was in-

cumbent upon him to proceed to Königsberg, Warsaw and Breslau to receive in their respective capitals the homage of the representatives of East Prussia, the Polish provinces and Silesia.

Queen Louisa's regret at the prospect of being absent for a while from her children was tempered by a feeling of relief at the distraction from sorrowful thoughts afforded by the journey. In peculiarly trying circumstances, she had recently been called upon to part with the companion of all her remembered life, her sister Frederica. By the royal family and the public alike, much sympathy had been manifested for the girl-widow of Prince Louis of Prussia. Yet, within a few months of his death, Countess Voss confides to her diary that the Princess knew well enough how to console herself. Towards the close of the year 1797, the old lady comments with disapproval on the frequent appearance in the royal circle of a not particularly attractive scion of nobility whom she designates "the everlasting Prince Solms". With this individual, whose full title was Prince Solms-Braunfels, Princess Louis went through an irregular form of marriage. For a while they contrived to keep the proceeding secret. When eventually it became known, it was but natural that Louisa should feel deeply grieved at the discovery of the long course of deception and at the inevitable separation from the sister who had been so much to her. Frederica and her prince were publicly remarried. The latter received a military appointment

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in the distant province of Anspach and started for his post, taking his bride with him.<sup>1</sup>

Before setting out for the ancient Prussian capital of Königsberg, the King issued a characteristically sensible manifesto. Therein he stated emphatically that outward display was to him a thing of no moment, and that his subjects could assure him of their allegiance and make his visit to the provinces enjoyable without putting themselves to needless trouble and expense.

The people, however, had ideas of their own as to what constituted a royal reception, and they were not to be restrained from carrying them out. Countess Voss, who accompanied the Queen, gives a graphic account of this eventful journey. Nothing escapes the keen-sighted old lady. And so felicitous is her selection of the incidents to be recorded at the close of each tiring day, that any blank spaces in the narrative can easily be filled in by the imagination of her readers. She literally takes them along with her, letting them see, as she then saw, the picturesquely attired holiday makers thronging the streets of the towns and villages, all eager to do honour to their King and Queen. There are deputations of quaintly costumed peasants and of sea-faring folk from the shores of the Baltic. There are presenta-

<sup>1</sup> Prince Solms died in 1814. A year later Frederica married her cousin, the Duke of Cumberland, who, on the accession of Queen Victoria, became King of Hanover. She was the grandmother of the present Duke of Cumberland.

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tions of addresses, flowers, fruit and more substantial gifts. This is one side of the picture. On the other we see a company of travellers, exhausted with heat and dust, with jolting over inconceivably rough roads, with constant noise and excitement. To Frederick William III. it was an experience to be endured with resignation in public and made the subject of much impatient comment whenever the royal party could secure an interval of privacy and rest. To Louisa the journey, in spite of its many drawbacks, was a source of constant interest and frequent amusement.

Now and again the King turned aside from the main route to inspect the troops stationed in some particular district. Until he rejoined his wife at the next halting-place, she drove on alone, but none the less amid undiminished enthusiasm. After all, it was the Queen in whom the country people were most interested. They were accustomed to the comings and goings of their kings. Of the Prussian queens, however, they had hitherto known little save that, if rumour was to be trusted, the lot of these ladies was not a particularly enviable one. But here, at last, was a queen in visible form, one whose presence was like a ray of sunshine. And she was evidently as glad to be among them as they were to welcome her. She looked younger even than her twenty-one years, very young to be saluted as the "mother of the people". Yet it was soon to become as natural to describe her thus as to refer to Frederick the Great as "Vater Fritz". By Louisa her husband's sub-

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jects were regarded very much as an extension of her family circle. Her feeling for them was not mere benevolence, but sympathy which enabled her to divine their wants and to see things from their point of view.

Even where she only stopped to change horses, she seemed to leave a gathering of friends behind. Old greybeards told how she had perceived them hovering on the outskirts of the crowd and had sent for them to come forward and speak to her. Grati-fied mothers related how the mother of Prussia's future kings had admired their little ones. A group of villagers boasted that at their request she had left her coach and partaken of an impromptu feast of pancakes and other good things of their providing.

There was a pleasant break of the journey at Danzig. The authorities of the seaport entertained their royal guests on board a ship specially fitted up for the occasion. While the festivities were in progress the vessel was sailing about on the calm waters of the bay.

Two days later the travellers came to the end of the three hundred and sixty-five miles that separate Berlin from Königsberg. The last stage of the journey was a veritable nightmare. "What with the heat, the clouds of dust, the shouting of the assembled multitudes, and the firing of salutes, we were literally blinded and deafened," writes the Countess. She goes on to describe Königsberg Castle as "a capacious but hideous building". It was well that she

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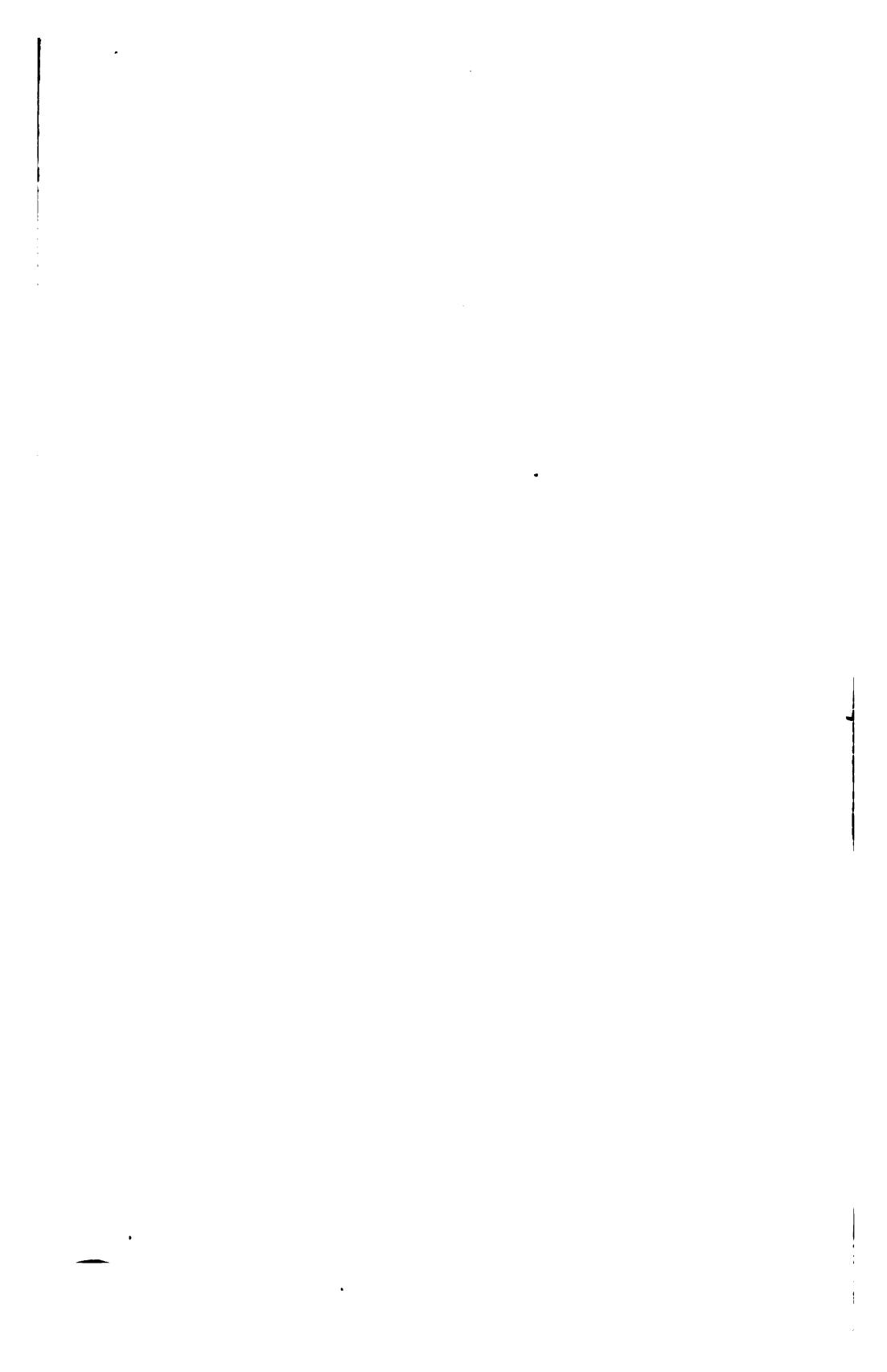
thunder of cannon, the pealing of bells and the cheers of the people "especially for the Queen".

A year later she accompanied her husband to the annual military manœuvres. These were appointed to take place in the Westphalian dominions of Prussia. The journey was by way of Magdeburg and Hanover. Thus, after an absence of twelve years, Louisa revisited her birthplace. Her association with Hanover doubtless strengthened the desire of Frederick William III. to add the Electorate to his other possessions. It was clearly never intended that the territory of a foreign ruler should permanently separate Brandenburg and Westphalia.

In 1799 the latter province was flourishing under the able government of Baron vom Stein. The representative of an ancient family, whose name was reminiscent of the rocky eminence above the town of Nassau whereon their mediæval fastness had been built, Stein was destined to exert a powerful influence over the future history of Prussia. He had inherited the rank of an imperial knight. The smallness of his dominion made the position of this description of nobleman somewhat akin to that of an English squire. The fact that the more powerful rulers of adjoining States were always on the watch for an opportunity of absorbing his inheritance, made the imperial knight more than nominally dependent on the protection of the Emperor, while it likewise kept him from becoming entangled in the policy which controlled the relations of the greater German



CARL FRIEDRICH, FREIHERR VOM STEIN



magnates one to another. It followed that, when the knight was cast in a thoughtful mould, he could more readily take a comprehensive view of questions affecting the Empire as a whole, than was possible to the representatives of other Germanic States. "Stein expressly attributes his devotion to the cause of the unity of Germany to the fact that he had been born a subject of the Empire and of the Empire only."<sup>1</sup>

The date of his birth was 1757. Advantages of station were, in his case, combined with singular advantages of upbringing. In the example and precept of his parents, we have the origin of that profound reverence for religion and lofty standard of honour and of duty which suggests parallelism between the character of Stein and that of Gladstone. During the infancy of Queen Louisa, Stein was also living under the jurisdiction of the British sovereign. For it was at the Hanoverian University of Göttingen that he studied jurisprudence with the view of practising in the imperial law courts. He also availed himself of the exceptional opportunities which Göttingen afforded of obtaining a thorough knowledge of English history and politics. Eventually he abandoned the profession of law and accepted an appointment in the mining department of the government of Frederick the Great. In recognition of his successful direction of the working of the Westphalian mines, Frederick William II. promoted him to the office of Supreme President of the Westphalian provinces.

<sup>1</sup> Seeley.

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It had been well for Prussia if, in 1799, Stein had been directing the policy of the Government, instead of serving as a local administrator. A year had gone by since Bonaparte had sailed for Egypt. There were no signs of his return. It was an unparalleled opportunity for such a combination of the European Powers as might overthrow the Government of the Directory and deprive France of the fruits of revolutionary victories. Russia was no longer holding back, but acting vigorously in concert with Great Britain and Austria. It needed only the adhesion of Prussia to make the coalition of the great Powers complete and, therefore, probably irresistible. From every side pressure was brought to bear on Frederick William III. Even Haugwitz and other Prussian ministers who usually advocated passivity and friendship with France were inclined to favour a policy of war. It was all in vain. The peace-loving monarch preferred to listen to the counsels of men like General Köckeritz, whose views coincided with his own. Prussia remained neutral, with the result that before any decisive advantage had been gained, Bonaparte was once more upon the scene. His victories over the Austrians led, indeed, to the fall of the Directory, but only that he himself might be appointed to the head of the State with the title of First Consul.

Having resolved to adhere to the terms of the Treaty of Basel, Frederick William proceeded to inspect the army, under the command of General Blücher, that was guarding the line of demarcation

on the west. Then, turning his face southward, he rejoined Queen Louisa, who by this time was on her way to Hildburghausen. There a family gathering was awaiting them. It included the Queen's father and grandmother. It likewise included Princess Frederica of Solms-Braunfels, and this meeting put an end to the feeling of estrangement between Louisa and her youngest sister which had followed the discovery of the latter's secret marriage.

From Thuringia the King and Queen continued their journey to Anspach, a recently acquired possession of Prussia. This visit led to more amicable relations with Princess Frederica's husband, who was stationed in the province. It also marked the beginning of a friendly acquaintanceship between their Majesties and the local governor, Baron von Hardenberg. Like Stein, he was destined to play an important part in Prussian politics.

The narrative of this particular journey reads like a summing-up of the past life of Queen Louisa. Before she returned to Berlin, she had revisited not only Hanover and Hildburghausen but Darmstadt, Frankfort and Weimar.

At Frankfort she had the pleasure of entertaining her former hostess, Frau Goethe, and of presenting the old lady with a handsome gold necklace. To a Prussian correspondent Goethe writes: "Your beautiful Queen has made many people happy in the course of her journey, none more so than my mother. Nothing could have gratified her more than these kindly

attentions in her advancing years." To Frau Goethe Prince George was as devoted as his sister Louisa. Even amidst the rush of social life in Berlin, he seizes a moment to thank her for her "dear letter" which he cannot answer in conventional phraseology. "It showed that you were still the same dear old Frau Rath. It never seemed to me at all surprising that you should be Goethe's mother. You feel in the same way. Often you express yourself very much in the same words as he would use. . . . See and keep well, and stay a long time in this world so that when I come to Frankfort we may clink our glasses together in memory of the good old times. The Queen assures me of her extreme pleasure in having seen you again at Frankfort and greets you heartily, and I, if you will permit me, will embrace you in the good old German way."

The brief stay at Weimar was a concession to Queen Louisa's desire to attend a performance of *Wallenstein*, the most recent of Schiller's dramas. The author was presented to the Queen, and like every one else he was charmed by her engaging manner. She was desirous that he should settle in Berlin, but nothing came of the overtures made to him at this time. It was on the occasion of this same visit to Weimar that Louisa made the personal acquaintance of Herder who had so long been her favourite prose writer.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE QUEEN IN BERLIN

QUEEN LOUISA was well content with her husband's decision to remain in occupation of the Crown Prince's palace even after his accession to the throne. Its modest apartments had a home-like aspect, and there was no insuperable difficulty in making them reasonably warm in winter. When guests had to be entertained, the court usually went into residence at Potsdam. This was a pleasant enough arrangement in summer. At other seasons, Louisa dreaded the all-pervading chilliness of a royal abode. In accordance with the prevailing fashion for women's garments, she wore low-cut dresses which afforded her no protection from variations of temperature. "Yesterday I nearly perished from cold." "I really thought the blood was going to freeze in my veins." These and many similar announcements occur in her letters from Potsdam. It was an exceptional occasion on which she records that "a whole mountain of coal has produced a fire of terrific fierceness. Thanks to this I am warm at last." In wintry weather Her Majesty generally went about the larger palaces shivering. Naturally

she suffered much from severe colds, and this doubtless increased the tendency to throat weakness, which has unfortunately been transmitted to certain of her descendants.

One can but marvel at the buoyancy of spirit which enabled her to make light of physical pain and very real discomfort. A troublesome gumboil merely suggests a new way of teasing Countess Voss. To her Mistress of the Household, always apprehensive lest Louisa should do anything to mar her beauty of feature and complexion, the mischievous young Queen writes: "I have been turned into a monster, a hideous monster. My left eye has disappeared behind the swelling of my cheek and I cannot see to write properly. Every one who comes into my room bursts out laughing. My woes and sufferings fail to arouse any compassion. They all say I am too ugly to be pitied." At another time Queen Louisa gleefully informs the same correspondent that she is writing "immediately after a meal," and that consequently "the royal cheeks are flushed and the royal nose is red". But, notwithstanding her gaiety of disposition, there still runs, like a refrain, through her letters from Potsdam, the expression of her longing to be back in her "good city of Berlin".

When her children had been left behind in the metropolis, her desire to return thither was naturally intensified. Her earliest letters to Countess Voss are petitions for detailed accounts of her first-born

son, whom she calls "my little angel"—"my dear little Fritz!" An epistle of very much later date makes playful allusion to "my five little monkeys". The year after she became Queen, her eldest daughter, Charlotte, was born. In course of time there appeared the little Prince Carl, whom his mother describes as "the prettiest of all my children," and then a second girl, Alexandrina.<sup>1</sup> Louisa's love of Berlin was, however, something apart from its association with her family life. She felt that it was indeed a capital of which she could be proud. Then, as now, the stranger coming within its gates was impressed by the width of its streets and the wonderful group of palaces and public buildings at the eastern end of Unter den Linden. From the windows of her husband's town residence, Louisa could see that famous thoroughfare, with its double avenue of lime-trees, stretching away towards the Brandenburg gate.

Writing in 1802, Sir George Jackson asserts with the positiveness of youth that, from the architectural point of view, Berlin might be regarded as "the first town in Europe". But, he adds, "in many other aspects it is undoubtedly very inferior. The small number of inhabitants in proportion to the size of it, renders its long, straight streets very dull and dreary. Like those of Paris, they have no

<sup>1</sup> For Queen Louisa's description of her children, see Chapter XVI.

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trottoirs, and are more offensively dirty than even the black, mud-begrimed streets of that lively capital."<sup>1</sup>

Queen Louisa may have heard of such luxuries as pavements, but it would hardly have occurred to her to covet them for her "good city". So far as her experience went, its streets were no worse than those of any other town. To her Berlin was the place where she felt most absolutely at home, the headquarters of the royal circle, the centre of the social, literary and artistic life of Prussia.

The little palace of Mont Bijou was the town residence of the Dowager Queen, happier by far in her widowhood than in her husband's lifetime. The King's brothers, Prince Henry and Prince William, had their separate establishments. In 1804 the latter married Marianne of Hesse-Homburg, a princess whose rare gifts of mind and heart endeared her to Queen Louisa and to every one who was not misled by her very reserved manner.

Opposite to the King and Queen there lived at intervals, until his death in 1802, His Majesty's great-uncle, the elder Prince Henry. In the palace of this somewhat distinguished soldier and statesman, Frederick William III. afterwards located his newly constituted University of Berlin. Another brother of Frederick the Great, Prince Augustus Ferdinand, resided near the Thiergarten, or wooded park on the further side of the Brandenburg gate. He was the father of Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, whose

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Letters.*

unconcealed admiration for Louisa, as Crown Princess, had been, for a while, a source of uneasiness to Countess Voss.

Soon after Louisa became Queen, this young man "who showed more genius than any Hohenzollern of the period," spent some time with his regiment in Westphalia. There, under the salutary influence of Baron Stein, he made some advance towards stability of character. Louis Ferdinand, his sister Louisa and her husband, Prince Anton Radziwill, were the most original and stimulating members of Queen Louisa's immediate circle. With their charm of manner, mental brilliancy and artistic gifts, they could effectually dispel the dulness and conventionality incident to the routine of court life. "The last of the Troubadours" was Goethe's description of Prince Radziwill, who, had he not been a nobleman, would probably have made his way to the front rank of musical composers. As it was, he attained a certain measure of fame. He was not merely a composer, but a skilled player on the violoncello, a delightful improvisatore and the moving spirit when court pageants or charades and tableaux with musical accompaniments had to be arranged for such occasions as royal birthdays. A representation of "Alexander's return from his Indian victories" was the chief feature of the *fête* given in honour of the Queen's birthday, 10th March, 1804. Sir George Jackson recounts that "the Queen herself took the part of Statyra, the daughter of Darius. She makes a con-

quest of the conqueror at first sight, which no doubt our Queen of beauty would have done, had the hero had the happiness of seeing her.”<sup>1</sup>

These elaborate entertainments were great events, involving much previous rehearsing. In general the court depended for recreation on public concerts and plays. An English visitor to Berlin in March, 1806, tells how he had seen the King and Queen at “a benefit concert given by a Mr. Romberg, a celebrated player on the violoncello. A lad of fourteen, Herr Meyerbeer, played a concerto of Mozart on the pianoforte, receiving great applause.”<sup>2</sup>

Both Frederick William and Louisa were exceedingly fond of dramatic performances, and were so often to be seen at the theatre that their entrance caused no commotion amongst the other spectators. It was the age of the great German dramatists, but they were never intimately associated with the Prussian capital. Their plays were given from time to time in Berlin; but the audiences were less enthusiastic than at Weimar. This at least was the case until 1804, when Schiller appeared in person to superintend the first Berlin performances of *William Tell*.

Queen Louisa had again induced her husband to offer the poet an assured income if he would transfer his residence from Weimar to the Prussian capital.

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Letters*.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Henry Reeve, *Journal of a Residence in Vienna and Berlin*.

Schiller had agreed to consider the offer, and Her Majesty was naturally anxious that this visit should be made as enjoyable as possible to her favourite writer. He was certainly impressed with the exceeding graciousness and heartiness of his reception at the palace. When the Queen understood that his two boys had accompanied him, they were duly included in the royal invitations and introduced to the young princes. A letter written by Schiller from Berlin announces that "Carl has sworn eternal friendship with the Crown Prince". The latter probably cherished a more kindly recollection of Carl von Schiller than of the youthful daughter of Madame de Staël, who came to Berlin with her mother the very same year. The two children were left to entertain each other while the Queen conversed with the famous Frenchwoman who was causing such a flutter in the literary circles of the capital. They were interrupted by a very woe-begone young Fritz who sought refuge beside his mother. He had contrived to offend Mademoiselle and she had retaliated by boxing his ears!

Much as he liked Berlin, Schiller could not decide to give up Weimar and the society of Goethe, and all further planning on the Queen's part was cut short by his death on 9th May, 1805. She was more successful in her overtures to another very fascinating writer, though even he did not remain in Berlin so long as she expected. This was Jean Paul Frederick Richter, poet, novelist, moralist,

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satirist. Amongst his earlier admirers were the Duke and Duchess of Hildburghausen, and it was during a visit to her sister Charlotte, in 1799, that Louisa made his personal acquaintance. The following spring Jean Paul announced his arrival in Berlin by sending the Queen a copy of his *Titan*. It was dedicated to Her Majesty and her sisters.

The Court was at Potsdam. But the very next day the author received a note of kindly acknowledgment from the Sans Souci palace. "I have received your *Titan*," writes Queen Louisa, "and it gives me pleasure to see that you retain the facility for amusing your countrymen and, at the same time, directing their attention to novel aspects of the truth. You know how to array your truths in such wonderful garments of romantic poetry, that it is impossible for them to be overlooked. Your aim of seeking to dispel a few of the clouds which darken the lives of our fellow-mortals, is so entirely beautiful that surely you will be permitted to attain it. And, just because this is your aim, I shall be very glad to see you during your sojourn here, and to show you how truly I am your very affectionate Louisa."

It was only to be expected that the author, who received such an appreciative and encouraging message, should straightway forget that he had only proposed to pay a flying visit to the Prussian capital. The days lengthened into weeks. For once, as his delightfully whimsical letters testify, the hard-working writer was enjoying himself to the full. Urgent in-

vitations failed to entice him to those purely masculine gatherings so popular with the wise and learned representatives of the citizens of Berlin. There was far more variety and human interest in the company which frequented the houses of certain prominent members of the Jewish community. Here Jean Paul could meet "scholars, Jews, officers, privy councillors, in fine, all sorts and conditions of men. Elsewhere they are cutting each other's throats. Here they fall on each other's necks." These gatherings also afforded opportunities for the intellectual comradeship between men and women which Madame de Staël missed in ordinary Berlin society. Jean Paul at least had no cause for complaint on that score. "Hitherto," he writes, "I have adored girls. Here I find the girls all ready to adore me. Heavens, how frank, and unaffected, and kindly, and pretty they are! Many a lock of hair have I received. Many a one has severed its connection with my own head. I really think that if I had gone into the business with a view to profit, I might have made as much by the crop on the outside of my scalp as by the ideas which sprout beneath it!" As for Her Majesty she is "the crowned Aphrodite, the lovely Queen who wrote and invited me to Sans Souci. I sat at table with her and she showed me all round the palace." She was intensely interested when, amongst the charming girls of Berlin, Jean Paul discovered the one who afterwards became his wife. She rejoiced in the growing friendship between him and her

brother George, who was also at Berlin in the summer of 1800. At the house of a mutual friend, Frau von Berg, the prince and the popular writer had frequent opportunities of meeting. Nowhere else could they have come to know one another more easily. Amongst the acknowledged leaders of Berlin society, two only were eminently successful in bringing together the aristocracy of rank and the aristocracy of intellect. They were Princess Louisa Radziwill and Frau von Berg.

The wife of Kammerherr von Berg possessed in a rare degree the power of gaining and keeping the friendship of men and women who, like herself, did not live on the surface of things. Baron Stein once declared that there were only three people with whom he felt perfectly at home. One of the three was Frau von Berg. After the marriage of her daughter to the grandson of Countess Voss, she became increasingly intimate with the royal family. To the Queen she was specially devoted. Their intercourse quickened Louisa's interest in the works of contemporary authors; for Jean Paul Richter was not the only literary genius who was attracted by Frau von Berg. She was acquainted with most of the outstanding writers of the period, from Goethe downwards. When they visited Berlin, they hastened to pay their respects to her. Thus she was sometimes able to bring about a meeting between the Queen and one of the greater lights of the world of literature. Sometimes, as in the case of Heinrich von Kleist,

she would direct the attention of the mother of the people to a promising youth whom a little judicious help would enable to scale the ladder of fame.

No longer could German writers complain, as in the days of Frederick the Great, that they met with no encouragement at Berlin. According to Madame de Staël, the King induced quite a number of men, distinguished in various walks of life, to settle in his metropolis. She enumerates a few of those remarkable persons; but, with the exception of William von Humboldt and Fichte, none of the names she mentions are those of men of first-rate ability. She is evidently unaware that the Humboldt family had been associated with Berlin long before the time of Frederick William III. William himself was a native of Potsdam, but his brother Alexander, the famous naturalist and explorer, was born in Berlin during the reign of Frederick the Great. It is however true that Queen Louisa's husband took a great interest in both the brothers, and the scholarly William became Prussian Ambassador at Rome.

There was also no foundation in the statement that Fichte had been expressly invited to the Prussian capital. Of his own accord he took refuge there when the persecuting orthodoxy of the Saxon Government drove him from his chair of philosophy at the University of Jena. If there was any idea of continuing to molest him at Berlin, it had to be given up. For when the King was informed of Fichte's arrival, he remarked: "If he is a peaceful citizen, I

am quite willing that he should live in my dominions. It is not the business of the State to pronounce an opinion on his religious views." Thus, almost on sufferance, there came to reside in the capital the man who, ere long, was to become a powerful factor in the moral and religious awakening of Germany.

The writers of Frederick William's day were not backward in expressing appreciation of his attempts to do his duty as a patron of learning. But their highest praise was reserved for the Queen who showed herself so sympathetic, so ready to befriend them. Her eulogists were representatives, not of Prussia alone, but of diverse German States. Generally speaking, they were likewise representatives of the romantic school of writers.

"The Romanticists," says Carlyle, "engaged in a far-famed campaign against Duncedom," that is to say, against the uninspired authors, incapable of seeing beyond the dead level of everyday reality, who, at the close of the eighteenth century, were still largely in possession of the German stage and circulating libraries.

Their contempt for these vapid scribblers was shared by Goethe and Schiller. For a time the two great masters of German literature displayed considerable alacrity in pricking bubble reputations. But in the long run their inclination was to take refuge from exaggerated realism in the world of classic antiquity. By so doing they severed themselves entirely from the adherents of the Romantic

school, who were firmly persuaded that the well-spring of poetical inspiration was to be found in the Middle Ages. Through the rosy mist of their exuberant imaginations, they saw the possibility of marvellous discoveries in the regions of mediæval lore. And if, as a result of their explorations, they failed to bring back all they promised, their writings were certainly calculated to set their fellow-countrymen thinking and to invest the early history and literature of Germany with such surpassing interest that the wordy effusions of commonplace minds seemed tedious by contrast. The Romanticists virtually rediscovered the epoch of the Minnesingers, or national bards. Since this last was also the epoch of chivalry and the crusades, it not only supplied them with a field for research, but with an effective background for their works of imagination, such as the dreamland romances of *La Motte Fouqué*, *Undine*, *Sintram* and *The Magic Ring*. Their spell has not lost its potency even yet.

Notwithstanding Queen Louisa's admiration for the works of Goethe and Schiller, she has far more in common with the romantic than with the classic writers. She shares the aspiration of the former after a warmer and more vital type of religion than was to be found in the rationalistic interpretations of Christianity current in those days. Within legitimate bounds she also shares their craving for a large measure of freedom in the ordering of the individual life. She has all their delight in an allegorical inter-

pretation of nature, all their interest in the civilisations of the past, and not a little of their sentiment and mysticism. It is no marvel that while the heroes of romantic narrative are always going in search of the ideal woman, their creators are well assured that they have already discovered her in the person of the Prussian Queen.

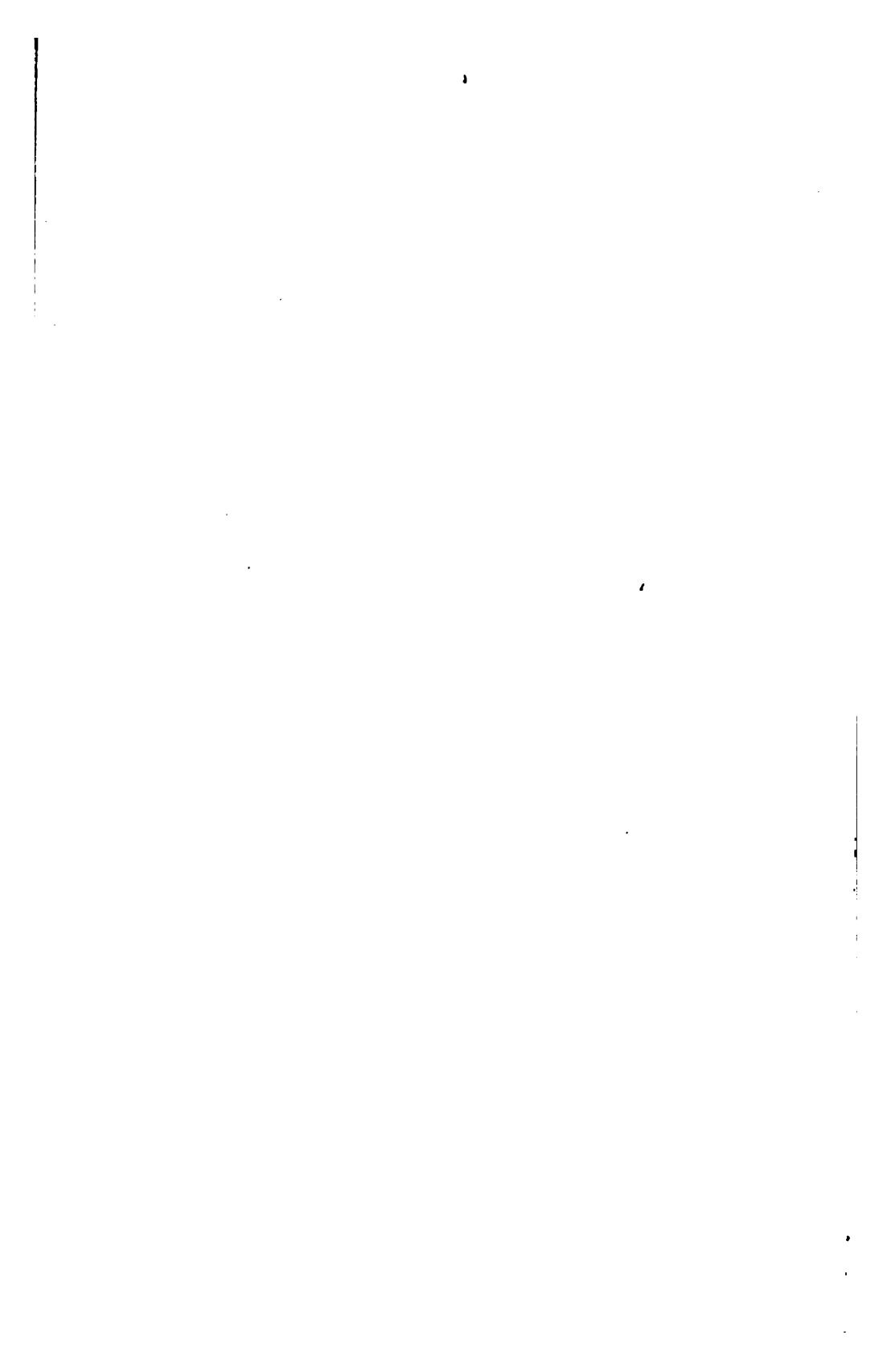
Speaking generally, the portraits of her, drawn by men of letters, are less detailed during the period immediately under consideration than they subsequently became. But at one time or another she may be seen as she appeared to Jean Paul Richter, whose writings form the connecting link between the classic and romantic schools; to Schleiermacher, the greatest of German preachers and the pioneer of modern Biblical criticism; to Kleist, the famous romantic dramatist; to August Wilhelm Schlegel, the literary critic and translator of Shakespeare; to the author of *Undine*, to Frederick von Hardenberg, better known by his pseudonym of "Novalis".<sup>1</sup>

It is "Novalis" who urges every mother to procure a portrait of Queen Louisa for her daughter's room. Thus, he says, "the young girls will have continually before them a lovely reminder of the ideal whereto they should seek to conform their lives. So shall likeness to the Queen become the chief characteristic, the national feature of Prussian

<sup>1</sup> He was a cousin of Baron von Hardenberg, the governor of Anspach and future minister of Frederick William III.



QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER THE PAINTING BY GUSTAV RICHTER AT COLOGNE



women. So shall we see, as it were, one pure and beautiful spirit embodied in a thousand forms."

"In times gone by it was needful to keep wife and children away from a court as from a place of pestilence. But verily we seem to have been looking on at a miracle of transubstantiation. A court has become a home, a throne a holy place, a royal alliance a union of hearts. Whoso would perceive the vision of abiding peace, let him journey to Berlin and behold the face of the Queen."

When the court was in residence at Berlin or Charlottenburg, visitors to the capital had no difficulty in seeing the Queen, though her countenance probably revealed more of the vivacity of her nature than its underlying peacefulness. On foot, on horseback, or in the carriage drawn by a single pair of horses, which the King had substituted for the more elaborate equipage of his predecessor, she went about the city with perfect freedom and safety. When her husband accompanied her, they were probably on their way to visit one of their numerous relatives, or to inspect some charitable or educational establishment subsidised by His Majesty. They were specially interested in the Military Academy. Amongst the students in the department for the training of young officers, was the Queen's step-brother, Prince Charles of Mecklenburg. From 1801 to 1805 the head of that department was Colonel Gerhard Scharnhorst. The integrity of his character and the thoroughness of his teaching gained him the esteem and apprecia-

tion of the more intelligent students. But no one dreamed that within a few years his name would be known and honoured in every German household. He had, it is true, travelled far since the days of boyhood when he worked on a small farm near Hanover belonging to his parents. From his father he inherited a love, not of farming but of soldiering. The elder Scharnhorst had served in the Hanoverian Army, and would never have left it but for the fact that his lowly origin made it impossible for him to advance beyond the rank of quartermaster. For his son Gerhard he secured a notable advantage in the protection of Count Lippe, a distinguished officer of that day. The Count sent the boy to a military training school, and thus he was able to attain a better position than his father in the army of the Electorate. But its highest grades were closed to the farmer's son, despite the ability he displayed as a soldier, a writer on military topics and an instructor in the regimental school.

In Prussia also the superior officers were, as a rule, members of the aristocracy. But exceptions were occasionally made. Coming to the country by invitation of the Duke of Brunswick, the head of the military department of the Prussian Government, Scharnhorst received a commission as lieutenant-colonel in a cavalry regiment quartered at Berlin. His reputation as a teacher led to his appointment as lecturer to the young princes and nobles, officers already by right of birth. By his insistence on the

superiority of the military system of Napoleon to that of Frederick the Great, Scharnhorst incurred the enmity of the upholders of traditional methods. But though he failed to convince the King of the necessity of moving with the times, he gained his esteem and support. In 1802 His Majesty raised Scharnhorst to the rank of a noble, and thus removed all obstacles to his further promotion.

When Prince Charles of Mecklenburg joined the band of youthful warriors, the Academy had an additional attraction for Queen Louisa. In losing the companionship of her sister, she had lost the feeling of close contact with her own family, and she was therefore overjoyed when it was decided that her brother and step-brother should complete their studies in Berlin. For the former Louisa had always reserved "one of the warmest little corners" of her heart. In the three years during which Prince George of Mecklenburg was chiefly resident in Berlin, the friendship between him and his favourite sister became peculiarly intimate. It meant a great deal to Louisa to have at hand this kindred soul to whom she could pour out her ideas and aspirations, her joys and sorrows. Just because he was of the same race as herself, George was able to comprehend his sister instinctively, and responded to the tender romantic side of her nature in a way that was impossible to her husband. Not for long could the young Queen feel depressed about anything if George were near to soothe her with the deference and fervour of

his affection. "What the devout Catholic finds in his patron saint, that I find in her," said this devoted brother. She was, he maintained, the dearest friend he had, and "if any one ventures to compare another woman with her, I will murder him". To none of her correspondents does Louisa write with such perfect unreserve as to her brother George.

While his sons were at Berlin, the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz paid more frequent visits to the city. Louisa prized every opportunity of intercourse with her father. She found it a relief to talk to him about her own children and consult him about their future. When he was away from her she wrote him long letters in which she described the little ones in the order of their age. This she called taking her correspondent round her portrait gallery.

The young Englishman whose praise of the Queen has already been cited makes mention also of the prettiness of her children; while of the King he says: "I doff my hat to him almost daily, for he is constantly walking about Berlin, and is no more noticed than any ordinary person, except by the civility of a passing salute from those who chance to recognise him".<sup>1</sup> This was quite in accordance with the wishes of the monarch who sought to approximate his life as nearly as possible to that of a private gentleman. The con-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Diaries of Sir George Jackson.*

trast between his own unregarded movements and the demonstrations of enthusiasm evoked by the appearance of his popular consort did not arouse in him any feeling of jealousy. Nothing indeed disturbed the good understanding between King and Queen—not even their divergence of opinion as to the use of money.

"The King is going to live on the income of the Crown Prince," said Frederick William III., when he had ascertained the amount of his father's debts. The intention was laudable, but, in carrying it out, he developed a tendency to parsimony inherited from the earlier rulers of Prussia. It took much persuasion to convince him that the Queen could not make ends meet on the allowance of the Crown Princess. A woman with less capacity for seeing the comical side of things would certainly have been irritated by His Majesty's inquiries into the details of her expenditure. By not taking the royal inquisitor too seriously, Louisa generally contrived to bring him round to her own point of view. And the discussion of ways and means might end in some such incident as the following, related by an army pensioner named Brandes. One day as he was passing the palace at Potsdam, he became aware that the King was signalling to him from a window. When he had been ushered into the royal presence, he found both King and Queen partaking of an informal dessert. After presenting his visitor with a basket

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of fruit, Frederick William held up a dainty combination of lace and ribbon—the cap of the eighteenth-century belle—and asked the old soldier what he thought it was worth. Brandes' surmise that it might have cost four groschen provoked much merriment. "The lady gave four thalers for it," said the King impressively. "Don't you think she must have a great deal of money when she paid so much for a thing like that? Go and ask her for four thalers for yourself." The Queen, still laughing, put the coins into the hand of the astonished pensioner, saying: "But that gentleman over there is far richer than I am. Go and ask him for twice as much." The outwitted monarch paid the price of attempting to give his wife an object lesson in economy, and Brandes went on his way the happy possessor of twelve thalers.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VISIT OF ALEXANDER I. OF RUSSIA TO THE PRUSSIAN COURT

THE summer of 1802 was a time of peace, not only in Prussia, but throughout Europe. By the Treaty of Amiens Napoleon had come to terms with his one undefeated adversary, the British sovereign. Statesmen were inclined to believe that the so-called "peace" was little more than a truce. But, for the time being, the Prussian Government was relieved to have no need even to consider the possibility of taking up arms. With light hearts the King and Queen set out for East Prussia where the troops were assembled for the annual manœuvres. Accommodation was provided for them at Memel. This is the most easterly coast-town in Prussia. It is therefore close to the Russian frontier.

At Memel Frederick William and Louisa were visited by the young Emperor of Russia, Alexander I. More than a year had elapsed since his accession to the throne after the murder of his father, Paul I. This tragic occurrence marks the close of the first stage in a singularly dramatic career.

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Five years only separated his reign from that of his grandmother, Catherine II., the contemporary of Frederick the Great and Frederick William II., and their coadjutor in the successive partitions of Poland. From Catherine Alexander inherited his capacity for government. He was very unlike her, however, in his mystical aspirations and responsiveness to any strong appeal to his higher nature.

At the age of sixteen, Catherine forced him into what proved an uncongenial marriage with a princess of Baden, afterwards known as the Empress Elizabeth. Her many good qualities did not unfortunately include the mental brilliance that would have made her a desirable companion to her husband. But, even if she had been able to win his affection, it is doubtful if she could have retained it permanently. A certain fickleness of disposition was perhaps the worst feature of Alexander's generally attractive personality.

From his tutor, Laharpe, a Swiss republican, he imbibed his love of humanity and liberty, together with enlightened views of government. When, therefore, at the age of twenty-three, he suddenly found himself invested with imperial power, he embarked on a course of reform which recalls the civil administration of Frederick the Great. The censorship of the press was suspended. A scheme for bettering the condition of the serfs was introduced. Restrictions on religious worship were abolished. The first steps were taken towards the introduction of a system of popular education. Important measures

of reform in the administration of the law were formulated and to some extent carried out.

It was at the outset of this period of emancipation, when the Czar was full of youthful hope and enthusiasm, that he crossed the frontier of his country and was received by the Prussian King and Queen at Memel.

They met for the first time, but not as strangers. Beings so similarly constituted, and so capable of being touched to fine issues, as Queen Louisa and Alexander, recognise each other instinctively. There is no need for them to tarry in the outer courts of the temple of friendship. Less romantic, but not less remarkable, was the feeling that declared itself between Frederick William and his guest. For the second time in his experience, the King knew what it meant to be suddenly and powerfully impressed by a new acquaintance. And, in its influence on his career in life, this meeting with the Czar at Memel was only second in importance to the first meeting with his future wife at Frankfort.

Many a time did Louisa recall the happy intercourse with the imperial visitor. Her lively satisfaction was reflected in her expressive countenance. "I really thought the Queen looked lovelier than ever," says Countess Voss when describing one of the days of Alexander's sojourn at Memel. Critical as the Countess was, she had nothing but a crescendo of praise for the young Czar. "He is," she writes, "a handsome man, fair, with very striking features.

But his figure is not good, or rather I should say he does not hold himself well. He seems to have a gentle, benevolent disposition. At all events he is exceptionally courteous and kindly."

For nearly a week Alexander remained with his new friends. The mornings were devoted to the manœuvres, the Queen usually accompanying her husband and guest on horseback. Dinner, the chief meal of the day, was partaken of "as usual" at two o'clock. An informal tea was followed by a dance or some other festivity. The Czar, according to Countess Voss, "was simply enchanted with the Queen," and everybody was enchanted with the Czar. He went out of his way to make himself agreeable to the whole court, especially it would appear to the Mistress of the Household. She was exceeding gratified by the way in which he proposed her health on the last evening of his visit. The following day, 16th June, 1802, she relates that "the Emperor breakfasted with their Majesties and then took leave of us. The tears came into my eyes when I said farewell to him; but, in very truth, I think we were all weeping. When he had disappeared from view, we at once set out for Tilsit. On our arrival the town's people gave us a very hearty reception."

Regarded in the light of after events, it was strange indeed that the first written message of Queen Louisa to the Emperor Alexander should have been despatched from Tilsit. "It would be in

vain," she says, "for me to try and describe how sorrowful I felt at your departure. It is terrible to think of it. The only thing that consoles me a little is the prospect of seeing you again in two years' time."

To her brother George she writes : "The intercourse at Memel was a divinely happy experience. The two monarchs are on the friendliest possible footing. They resemble one another in their main principles of action, in their uprightness, benevolence, and readiness to forward all noble ends. They have the same liking for simplicity, the same disregard for the ceremonious splendour of a royal or imperial throne. My good King greets you and gives me a thousand kindly messages for you. He behaved like an angel the whole time, and is winning golden opinions everywhere."

The eagerly anticipated renewal of intercourse with the Russian Emperor was delayed for more than three years; but frequent letters helped to strengthen the friendly relationship which had been entered into at Memel. In honour of the Czar, the second daughter of the King and Queen of Prussia received her name of Alexandrina.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GATHERING STORM

**A** POEM by Victor Hugo in praise of Napoleon I. contains a striking description of that hero standing on the threshold of the nineteenth century and throwing his giant shadow athwart the years to come. From 1803 onwards to the Battle of Waterloo, the history of Europe is simply a stupendous chapter in the biography of this latter-day rider of the Red Horse. Included in that chapter is the record of the time when his shadow fell darkly over Prussia and over the life of Prussia's Queen.

Reference has been made to Frederick William's refusal to join in the War of the Second Coalition. The issue of that war was the establishment in France of a new monarchy (known in the first instance as the Consulate) and nothing short of a revolution in Germany. Numerous small States of the Empire were secularised and handed over to the more powerful German potentates as compensation for territories whereof they had been deprived when, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Lunéville (1801) the Empire ceded to France both Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine.

Prussia was amongst the Powers which profited by the acts of secularisation. From time to time Napoleon made overtures for a definite alliance with Frederick William III. A more resolute and less scrupulous Prince might have decided that the advantages of such a union outweighed all other considerations. But since the Prussian King declined to range himself on the side of France, it was clearly to the interest of that country that he should abide by the terms of the Treaty of Basel. Until the year 1806, it was therefore part of the policy of Napoleon to reward him for his neutrality. He was lavishly indemnified for his losses on the left bank of the Rhine. Between that river and the Elbe Hanover was, in the end, the only State of any importance interrupting the continuity of his dominions.

But no sooner had this desirable condition of things been brought about than Frederick William was called upon to consider whether or not he was prepared to accept the responsibilities as well as the benefits of the Treaty of Basel.

There had been great rejoicing on both sides of the English Channel over the proclamation of the Peace of Amiens. Yet a temporary cessation of hostilities was all that had been achieved. Early in 1803 the First Consul was assembling in the neighbourhood of Boulogne the forces destined for the invasion of the island kingdom. As a German Elector, however, the British sovereign could be

invaded without crossing the sea. Accordingly "Napoleon caused a body of French troops to pass the German frontier from Holland, that is to say, to cross the line of demarcation, and take possession of Hanover. The proceeding was Napoleonic in its lawlessness, but Prussia took a long step in the downward path which led to her overthrow at Jena, when she witnessed it without interfering." . . . "The King," said Haugwitz, "is determined once for all to show to Europe in the most open manner that he will positively have no war *unless he is himself directly attacked.*"<sup>1</sup> The year 1804 found him still trying to steer a middle course. He recognised Napoleon's assumption of the imperial title and kept aloof from an Anglo-Russian combination against the new Emperor.

But his indifference to the changed government of France was not shared by the representative of the Holy Roman Empire. Francis II. perceived that his own imperial position was menaced by that of Napoleon. Seeing the latter apparently absorbed in attempts to elude the vigilance of the British naval commanders and effect a landing on the English coast, it seemed to Francis that the time had come for striking a fresh blow at the overtopping power of France.

Accordingly he threw in his lot with England and Russia, and began the War of the Third

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*

Coalition by sending an army to invade Bavaria. This force was to be followed up and supported by a body of troops from Russia. But before the auxiliaries had time to reach the seat of war, Napoleon had marched his legions across the Continent and surrounded and taken captive the entire Austrian army at Ulm on the Danube. Thus he had a new land victory to set over against the almost simultaneous defeat of the French admiral at Trafalgar.

The Russians and a second Austrian army fell back as the victorious French Emperor pushed on to Vienna. The allies set their hopes on the result of the battle which must needs be fought before their enemy could return to France. In one respect their outlook had become more hopeful. Napoleon had secured the aid of a contingent of the French forces quartered in Hanover, by ordering them to join him by the most direct route, regardless of the fact that this led through the Prussian principality of Anspach. Thus there had occurred that infringement of the rights of Prussia as a neutral Power, which Frederick William had declared would alone induce him to take up arms.

And that pacific monarch gave evidence of being roused at last. He issued orders for the mobilisation of his army and for the concentration of troops on his southern and western frontiers. He also invited the Czar to confer with him at Berlin.

Thus it happened that, in October, 1805, Alexander came to pay his second, long-talked-of

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visit to Frederick William and Louisa. There had been no abatement in the affectionate esteem where-with they regarded him, nor in his kindly feeling for them. To the Queen he had written letters which, in reply, she described by her favourite adjectives "heavenly" and "angelic". Now, at last, the three friends met again—not, as at Memel, under a cloudless June sky, but in changeful autumn weather when the last dead leaves were falling in the parks and gardens of Potsdam. Nor could they resume the light-hearted converse of former years. The nature of the Czar's errand entailed grave discussion of the political situation.

Since Napoleon's violation of Prussian territory, it had not been possible for Queen Louisa to be kept in ignorance of considerations affecting the foreign policy of the country. In after days she blamed herself, not without reason, for slackness of interest in the struggle between France and other European Powers during the early years of her husband's reign. At this period she entertained friendly feelings towards France as well as towards Russia, and exchanged presents with the wife of the First Consul. Her awakening came in the year 1804. French Royalists plotted the assassination of Napoleon. Their attempt failed, and the intended victim avenged himself by kidnapping and executing the only Bourbon within reach—the wholly innocent Duc d'Enghien. All Europe was indignant when the facts of this judicial murder were disclosed, and

Queen Louisa was not convinced of the cogency of the reasons of state which restrained her from wearing mourning for the ill-fated prince. Napoleon's subsequent disregard for the treaty rights of Prussia made her eager for the Government to break off all relations with him. Thus Alexander found her prepared to give sympathy and support to the cause of the allies.

The outcome of this visit of the Czar to the Prussian court was the treaty of Potsdam, signed 3rd November, 1805. It was a conditional treaty of alliance between Austria, Russia and Prussia, "whereby Prussia undertook to offer Napoleon terms on behalf of the three Powers, and in case these terms were not accepted within four weeks, to join the coalition. The midnight scene, in which the Czar and the King of Prussia swore eternal friendship at the tomb of Frederick the Great, gave proper solemnity to the great event which seemed to decide the fate of Europe by setting the greatest military Power after France on the side of the enemies of France, and creating at last that fourfold coalition which hitherto it had been impossible to realise."<sup>1</sup>

At this midnight scene Queen Louisa was present. Illustrations of the incident show her standing between the two monarchs and seemingly taking the oath with them. On her part, at least, the vow thus registered was faithfully kept. Had she been a reigning sovereign there is little doubt that Prussia's

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein*, vol. i., p. 236.

intervention in the affairs of Europe would have been swift and effectual. As it was, she could only strive to confirm her husband in the determination to support his allies by every means in his power. To her it was inconceivable that a compact which had been entered into so solemnly should not be productive of great results.

Napoleon on his side was concerned to render inoperative this alliance which he clearly foresaw was fraught with danger to the success of his projects. And the Queen whose influence had become an obstacle in his path, was henceforward reckoned among his political enemies. Nor can his attitude towards her be regarded as incomprehensible. She was ceasing to be a merely titular majesty and developing into a very real Queen of Prussia.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with the treaty of Potsdam, Count Haugwitz was sent to Vienna to acquaint Napoleon with the decisions of the three contracting Powers. The report of the envoy was eagerly awaited in Berlin. Pending its arrival the Prussian troops were to receive no order to advance. And, since the expected communication was not forthcoming, they remained inactive while at Austerlitz, in Moravia, Napoleon gained the most brilliant of all his victories over the united armies of Austria and Russia.

Haugwitz averred that he had been unable to

<sup>1</sup> She was now the only Queen of Prussia. The Dowager Queen died 25th February, 1805.

obtain a decisive interview with the French Emperor before the battle. But as a prominent member of the party within the Prussian kingdom that favoured friendship with France, he was doubtless ready enough to follow Napoleon's lead. Instead, therefore, of severing the connection between the two countries, he returned to Berlin with the draft of a conditional treaty between France and Prussia. To Frederick William, as the price of his alliance, Napoleon offered the possession of Hanover, heedless of the fact that the Electorate had never been formally ceded to France.

It was an offer which had the intended effect of impaling the King on the horns of a dilemma. To accept meant the fulfilment of his natural desire to reign over an unbroken expanse of territory. It also seemed to afford a means of getting rid of the French troops within the line of demarcation. The only drawback was the certainty of war with England. On the other hand, to refuse would give offence to Napoleon, and probably lead to a war with France, and that too when Austria was incapacitated from taking the field and the Czar had been forced to withdraw the forlorn remnant of his army under cover of a truce.

Not yet did the Prussian Government realise that war with France was a foregone conclusion, nor fathom Napoleon's design of separating the King from his allies before the contest began. For in that Government mediocrities still predominated,

though it was no longer composed entirely of such. Stein, transferred from Westphalia to Berlin in the capacity of Minister of Finance, had begun his labours in the cause of reform by the abolition of internal customs. And since Haugwitz had chosen to identify himself with the interests of France, all transactions with Russia were entrusted to Baron von Hardenberg, formerly governor of Anspach. The politician who thus became a sort of second Foreign Minister belonged by birth to Brunswick. "He was a man of honour and ability. If we put Stein and Scharnhorst aside, no man of that generation did or underwent so much for Prussia. But his career was in a great degree spoiled by his domestic unhappiness, which drove him into profligate habits and profligate society, and deprived him of the respect of good men."<sup>1</sup> Queen Louisa quickly discerned the sterling qualities which were obscured to others by Hardenberg's less worthy attributes, she gave him her confidence and had no reason to regret it. Whatever his shortcomings in other respects, he never wavered in his chivalrous devotion to the Queen of his adopted country.

As the representative of a policy of friendship with Russia, he was brought into frequent communication with her. For with the object of concealing from Napoleon the negotiations between Berlin and St. Petersburg, Hardenberg resided on his own estate and avoided direct intercourse with the King

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*



CARL AUGUST, BARON VON HARDENBERG  
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY GEBAUER



by addressing himself to the Queen. Thus Louisa was put in the way of gaining considerable insight into the working of the government, especially in the department of foreign affairs.

In spite of her expostulations, in spite of the entreaties of a considerable party in Berlin itself opposed to further dealings with Napoleon, it was decided to accept his proposals, and this although the too hasty demobilisation of the army had made it possible for him to offer Frederick William less favourable terms than those of the conditional treaty. As had been foreseen, war with England followed the acceptance of Hanover, Fox declaring that Prussia had now united "all that is contemptible in slavery with all that is hateful in robbery".

Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz made him, for the time being, supreme in central and southern Europe. His former overtures to the Prussian King were prompted by his need of some power in Germany itself whereon he could rely for support. He was now able to dispense with Prussia by inducing sixteen princes of southern and western Germany to range themselves definitely on his side under the name of the Confederation of the Rhine. This was a severe blow to Prussia. Thereby she found herself deprived of her influential position in the Germanic world. And the Germanic world itself, like many another ancient institution, was crumbling away at the touch of the conqueror. There was no longer even a shadow of the famous empire of

Charlemagne when the princes of the newly formed Confederation sent delegates to the Imperial Diet at Ratisbon to intimate their renunciation of their allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire. Francis II., recognising the significance of this step, promptly resigned his mediæval title, and from that time forward was known as Francis I., Emperor of Austria.

The summer of 1806 found Queen Louisa in somewhat indifferent health. Grief for the loss of an infant son and anxiety concerning the future of the country had preyed on her mind and reduced her bodily strength. Her physicians prescribed a course of treatment at the mineral springs of Pyrmont. The medicinal waters, the charmed atmosphere of the woodland, the companionship of her father, brother and other friends, all combined to hasten her recovery, though Prussia and its needs still occupied the chief place in her thoughts. Stein and Hardenberg had resolved to try and open the King's eyes to the real character of the ministers whom he honoured with his confidence. Since the conclusion of the fatal treaty with Napoleon, His Majesty had certainly ceased to put any trust in Haugwitz, but he did not dismiss him from office. Associated with him were the cabinet ministers Beyme and Lombard and Generals Köckeritz and Zastrow. Not one of the five could be described as a statesman and the latter two were mere nonentities. Louisa was now fully aware that their influence on the King was disastrous and that they had brought the country

to the verge of ruin. She was prepared to support any scheme which held out a prospect of better things. Already, in the month of May, Stein had submitted to her a memorial, setting forth proposals for the reform of the cabinet, which he thought of presenting to the King. While approving of its general tenor, Louisa declared emphatically that it was far too uncompromising and calculated to offend His Majesty and do more harm than good. The plan therefore fell through. While she was at Pyrmont another memorial was under contemplation. This time Hardenberg was the moving spirit. On such a subject he could not address himself directly to the Queen, but he held long written consultations with Prince Wittgenstein, who was in attendance on Her Majesty in his capacity of Chamberlain to the Royal Household.

To Wittgenstein, Hardenberg writes accordingly enumerating the reasons which made the dismissal of the cabinet ministers a matter of urgent necessity. He then continues : " You know all my thoughts and feelings concerning our sad, shameful and dangerous position. That it is dangerous the King does not perceive, because his advisers are always trying to throw a thick veil over it. Thus he remains unconscious of what every one but himself sees quite clearly. I beg you to ascertain from the Queen if it is possible to hope for any change for the better, and how we should set about trying to make the King realise the actual situation. Go down on your

knees and beseech her to consider the subject very carefully and to let me know through your letters how she thinks we ought to proceed. I will certainly act in accordance with her suggestions. Does she believe that it would be wise to hand the King a diplomatically worded digest of the present state of affairs? Should this document be signed by a few persons or by a considerable number? When would there be a favourable opportunity of presenting it? Above all, will it be possible to bring about a change in the construction of the ministry? Will the Queen consent to help us, or does she hold that she would thereby compromise herself?"

To this communication Wittgenstein replied: "Her Majesty can take no acknowledged part in this proceeding, but privately she will do her utmost to support your endeavour. She is of opinion that a written petition signed by a number of influential men, including distinguished representatives of the army, would have an excellent effect."

In giving this advice, Louisa shows that she had not yet learned to allow for the King's extreme sensitiveness with regard to matters affecting his royal prerogative. The signatures appended to the petition included those of His Majesty's brothers, his cousin, Prince Louis Ferdinand, and other influential individuals. But when it came to be presented to the King he was merely exasperated by what he regarded as insubordination, especially on the part of the military officers.

The history of this attempt to overthrow the Government is chiefly interesting because of the evidence it affords that reforming statesmen were beginning to look upon the Queen as their best ally. "She is to me," says Hardenberg, "the ideal of womanly perfection, womanly grace, beauty and every attractive attribute. My only hope for the country is based on her penetrating insight, her patriotism and her sense of honour." At Pyrmont she carried on an animated correspondence with her husband, who was engaged in forming a series of alliances with other potentates, so as to counter-balance the aggressive policy of Napoleon. She commends him for having sent an autograph letter on the subject to the Emperor of Russia. "This is what I have been wanting all along," she writes. "It is a very necessary step. If you continue to act in this way, I flatter myself that there will be no more confusion in our foreign policy. More self-confidence is the one, the supreme thing in which you are lacking. Once you have attained it, you will be able to decide questions more rapidly. And, having come to a decision, you will insist more firmly on your commands being executed."

The Elector of Hesse-Cassel had also come to Pyrmont for treatment. Very comical is Louisa's account of how, from solicitous inquiries about his gouty limbs, she led on to the subject of politics and finally secured the promise of his adhesion to the North German Confederation. "He tells me," says

the Queen, "that you have confirmed all my statements in a letter three sheets long. That was a master stroke on your part. If his army of twenty-five thousand men were joined to ours we might do wonders in checking these infamous Frenchmen who are spreading misery throughout the world. I am charmed to hear of the alliance with Saxony. May the news from Russia be equally good."

With Queen Louisa's sojourn in Pyrmont the second period of her life comes to a close. She returned to Berlin in the beginning of August, when the Prussian Government was receiving in quick succession the news of the establishment of the Confederation of the Rhine, of the abdication of the Emperor Francis II., and worst of all, of Napoleon's intention to make peace with England by the restoration of Hanover to George III.

It happened that representations of Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* were being given at the court theatre. To Louisa and all like-minded spectators of the play, it seemed in very truth a parable for the times. Not France downtrodden by the armies of England, but Prussia humiliated by the might of France, was what they saw imaged forth upon the stage.

At Berlin an influential band of patriots had for some time been advocating war with Napoleon as the only means of securing the safety of the country and wiping out the ignominy of the past. The most prominent member of this party, largely com-

posed of young enthusiasts of the upper classes, was Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. It was now able to boast of the active support of Queen Louisa. She was convinced that a conflict with France could no longer be staved off.

There was much to be said for the view of these patriots that the King might take up arms with a good deal of confidence. The Czar was ready to co-operate with him ; and, if he were not to retain possession of Hanover, George III. might be counted upon as a second ally. The pressure brought to bear upon him overcame His Majesty's hesitation. Not without hope that, at sight of Prussia prepared for warfare, Napoleon might assume a more conciliatory attitude, Frederick William again consented to the mobilisation of his army.

Before the end of this same month of August, an incident occurred which, if judiciously handled, might have brought the whole of Germany to the support of Prussia. Napoleon's ability to dictate to the princes of Europe was in large measure due to the fact that he commended himself to their subjects by persistently reaffirming and trading upon the humanitarian sentiments which impelled the Girondist Government of France to declare war against Austria and Prussia in 1792. But at this critical moment the illusory idea of Bonaparte as the champion of popular rights was effectually dispelled by his method of trying to prevent the circulation of patriotic literature. A Nuremberg

bookseller, named Palm, was accused by the French of having sold a pamphlet entitled *Germany in her Deepest Degradation*. He was promptly arrested and condemned to death. Proofs of his entire innocence of the so-called crime were forthcoming, but before they could be brought forward Palm was executed (26th August, 1806).

Here was signal proof that, to Napoleon, the rights of the people were of no more account than the rights of their rulers. If he wanted to make an example, it mattered not whether the victim were the Duc d'Enghien or an obscure tradesman. So great was the general indignation that a war with the tyrant was regarded as a sort of crusade. Had Frederick William been a popular leader, he would have had no difficulty in enlisting recruits to his standard. It was the wish of Germans everywhere that the Prussian army might have good success.

It was still, apparently, what it had been so long, the invincible army of "Old Fritz". Yet the few who were not deceived by outward seeming, had grave misgivings as to the issue of the impending conflict. As already stated, the rank and file of the Prussian regiments was composed of ignorant serfs between whom and their officers, nearly all nobles, there was little community of interest. Since the King had no desire to lead his forces, the office of commander-in-chief devolved on the Duke of Brunswick. It was not forgotten that his tactless-

ness, and inability to formulate a sound plan of campaign, had brought discredit on the Prussian army in 1792. He now proceeded to show that he had not profited in the least by Napoleon's methods of conducting warfare. For he ordered the troops to concentrate in Thuringia, as far removed as might be from the Russian frontier and the possibility of acting in conjunction with the armies of the Czar.

Queen Louisa had always seen the Prussian soldiers under favourable auspices and she was confident that they would give a good account of themselves. There was general satisfaction amongst them when it became known that she would accompany her husband to the seat of war.

So it came to pass that, in the gray dawn of a September morning, the King and Queen took leave of their children and, passing through the crowds assembled to wish them good speed, began their journey towards the headquarters of the army.

## CHAPTER X

### THE CAMPAIGN OF JENA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

**I**F Frederick William and Louisa quitted their capital with any feeling of anxiety concerning the safety of the little flock left behind with tutors and nurses, it was speedily dispelled. For, as they came to the end of the first stage of their journey, they saw before them the strongly garrisoned fortress of Magdeburg guarding the approach to Berlin. And, to all appearance, it was as ready to bid defiance to an investing force, as in the days when it had held out against the besieging army of the mighty Wallenstein.

From Magdeburg the royal travellers proceeded to Halle, the seat of the University founded by the first King of Prussia. In 1806 students were being attracted thither by the fame of Schleiermacher, whose lectures and sermons were ushering in a new era in theology.

In Naumburg, the next halting place, the King was joined by Ferdinand Gentz, a man of scholarly attainments, who had held Government appointments both in Berlin and Vienna. He was now employed to draw up the royal manifesto, setting forth the

reasons for war and also the proclamation to the army. Gentz accompanied the court to Weimar and thence to Erfurt. At the latter place definite information as to the whereabouts of Napoleon's army was brought by the Queen's sister Charlotte, whom the approach of the French had driven from Hildburghausen. A council of war was summoned and the general disposition of the forces agreed upon. But outside the council chamber distrust of Brunswick was so openly expressed that General Blücher ventured to write and request the King to take command himself. There was, however, no persuading him that he was adapted for the position of leader.

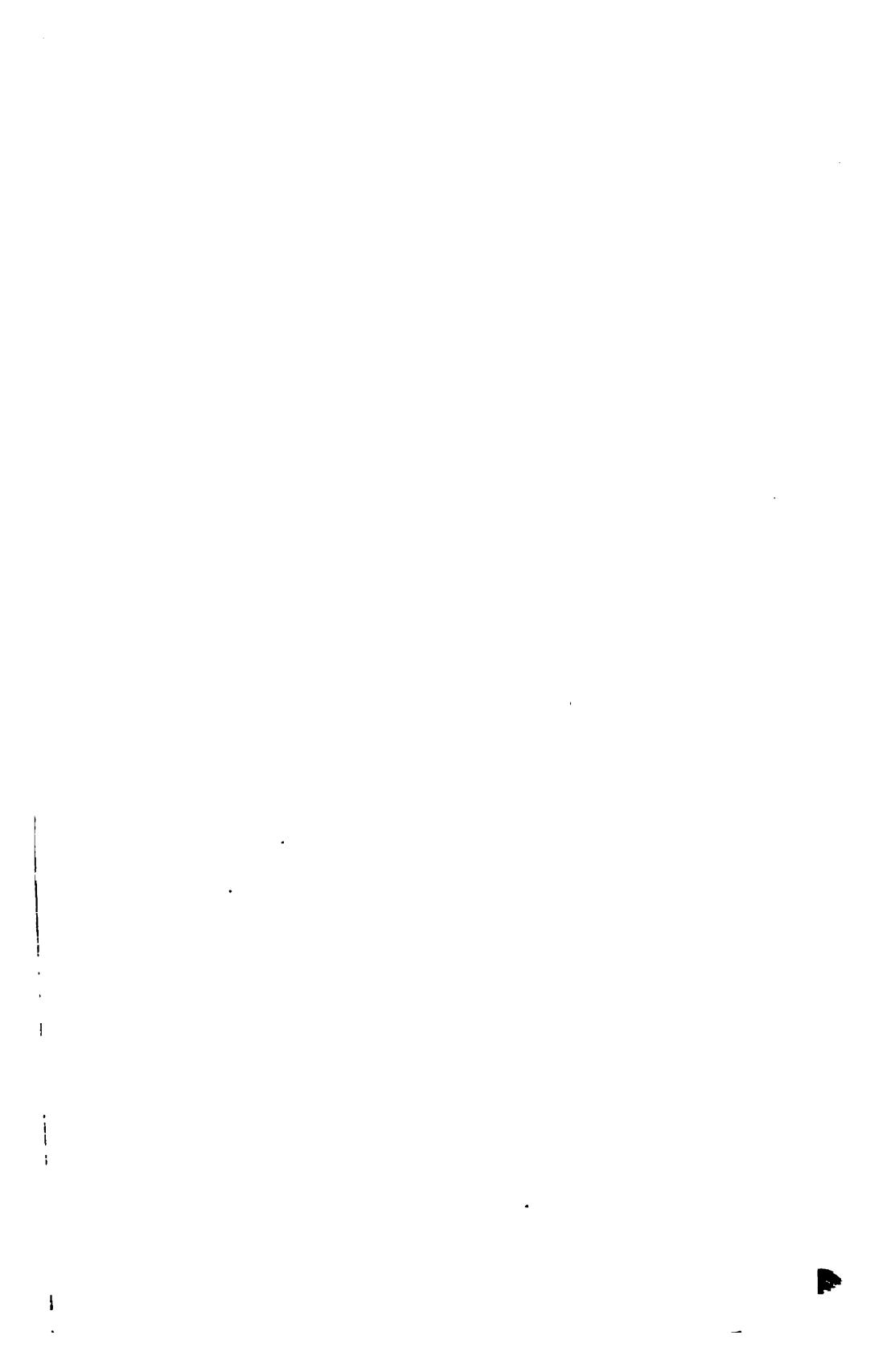
Queen Louisa was aware of the prevailing feeling but could not alter her husband's decision. On 9th October she sent for Gentz and had with him a lengthy conversation on the political and military outlook. Gentz's diary contains a striking account of this interview. The Queen began by inquiring his opinion with regard to the war and its probable result, adding immediately : "I do not ask because my courage needs reviving, and I know perfectly well that, if you take an unfavourable view of the situation, I am the last person to whom you would impart it. But men who are in a position to judge must have grounds whereon to base their hopes. What I want to know is whether or not their reasons for hoping agree with my own." Thereupon," continues Gentz, "I went over all the reasons which seemed to promise a successful issue to the struggle.

I laid special emphasis on the favourable condition of public opinion, on the friendly attitude of other Powers, and the earnest desire throughout Germany that victory would be on the side of Prussia. The Queen replied : ‘For some time I had misgivings as to the drift of public opinion, especially in other countries, with regard to this campaign. I am well aware that the feeling towards Prussia has not been particularly friendly of late. Howbeit, during the last week or two I have been making discoveries which have inspired me with the utmost confidence. You know the history of the past better than I do. But is not this a moment when its shortcomings might be overlooked?’ She went on to speak freely of the war of 1805, and this was by no means the least interesting part of our conference. I was fairly astonished at the exactitude of her knowledge. She was ready, not only with dates, but with reflections on what the average mind would have considered insignificant details. Ineffaceable is the impression of the friendliness and sympathy which characterised her references to the misfortunes of the House of Austria. More than once I saw the tears come into her eyes.

“The Queen proceeded to touch upon the charge of partisanship of Russia which had been brought against her in one of the newspapers. ‘It is,’ she said, ‘a most unjust and groundless accusation. I am ready, now and always, to testify to the zeal, devotion and personal worth of the Czar Alexander.



QUEEN LOUISA  
AFTER THE PASTEL PORTRAIT BY SCHRÖDER



But far from regarding Russia as likely to prove the chief factor in the deliverance of Europe, I have merely looked upon her as a possible source of help in the last resort. *I am firmly persuaded that the one and only means of deliverance is the close union of all who bear the name of German.'*"

These are memorable words, with more of the ring of Frederick the Great about them than any of the utterances of her husband or father-in-law. Her ability to see always beyond the frontiers of Prussia, the larger world of Germany, was due to an upbringing which, like that of Stein, had engendered familiarity with the imperial system rather than with the political prejudices of any single State.

In the early days of her married life, Louisa had expressed satisfaction in being a soldier's wife. Throughout the campaign, she certainly proved herself equal to the demands made upon her in that capacity. There was the King to be inspired, not indeed with courage, but with the inclination to take a cheerful view of things. There were the soldiers, not over-confident in their leaders, and all the more needful of the stimulus of enthusiasm for the monarchy. Gentz relates that the officers, alive to the value of the Queen's inspiring presence, begged him to negative any proposal for hastening her return to Berlin. She herself was anxious to remain as long as possible. She was staying at Weimar on 11th October when she heard of the repulse of the vanguard at Saalfeld and of the death of the com-

manding officer, Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. Then came the alarming news of French soldiers having been sighted near Naumburg, that is to say, between the Prussian army and Berlin. This involved a rapid change in the disposition of the troops. Finally they were drawn up in the neighbourhood of Jena and Auerstädt.

On 13th October the Queen set out to join her husband at the last-named place. She was nearing her destination when the Duke of Brunswick announced that it would be hazardous for her to proceed as a battle was impending. She turned back just in time. The French were beginning to occupy the region. Late at night she arrived at Weimar, only to be received by her mother's cousin, the kindly Duchess Louisa, with the information that the Queen of Prussia was forthwith to make her way to Berlin. An officer was awaiting her with an escort and instructions as to the route.

Before sunrise she was gone from Weimar. And again she was just in time. For by nightfall the town was in the hands of the French, and Duchess Louisa was constrained to play the part of hostess to Napoleon. The campaign had been decided by two great battles fought simultaneously. At Jena Prince Hohenlohe's division had faced double their number of French and fought bravely till resistance was no longer possible. Near Auerstädt Brunswick failed to overcome the opposing forces although they were outnumbered by his own. At the end of the day the

surviving leaders of the vaunted Prussian army had found themselves obliged to undertake a retreat which was to prove infinitely more disastrous than the dual battle.

Of all this, however, Queen Louisa knew nothing at the time. More effectually protected by the dense mist of the autumn morning than by her guard of soldiers, she and her ladies had passed the French outposts unobserved and, through the region of the Harz Mountains, were hastening towards Brunswick. While the battle lasted, they could but listen in agonised suspense to the booming of the cannon. It was always with a shudder that Louisa alluded to this terrible journey. Its incidents were lost sight of. It became a memory of concentrated suffering that could find no utterance even in prayer. She could only feel, she says, how true were the words, "we know not how to pray as we ought".

Before the travellers reached their first stopping place, the Queen's carriage broke down and had to be abandoned. She continued her journey in an open vehicle and without the military escort. The little company had been ordered to return as soon as she was in safety. With her instinctive tendency to note the symbolical aspects of nature, she could hardly pass as she did through long stretches of woodland scenery and miss the sad suggestiveness of the falling leaves as "the whole year set apace".

Still without definite news she arrived in Brunswick on the evening of the day following her de-

parture from Weimar. Here she found the court already in mourning for Prince Louis Ferdinand and already informed that the Duke of Brunswick had received the dangerous wound of which he died soon afterwards.

Curiously enough, it was at Brandenburg, on the site of the stronghold associated with the remote beginnings of the Prussian monarchy, that the Queen heard of the disaster which made its continued existence extremely problematical. "The King lives—the battle is lost": so ran the message. The outlook was appalling. But Louisa realised that it was no time to give way to grief. Less than forty miles separated her from the capital. "Let us pull ourselves together," she said to her attendants; "it will never do to spread terror in Berlin."

On, therefore, they went, passing through Potsdam where the Queen had received her first welcome to Prussia and where many of the happiest days of her married life had been spent. The last stage of her journey was along the selfsame road where the crowds had gathered to greet her as the Crown Prince's bride thirteen years before. It was late when she reached Berlin. The dim light of the lanterns showed that the citizens who were still abroad were either gloomily silent or whispering together. At least she would not be called upon to break the news of the calamity. The people had heard of it already.

At the palace she learned that she would have

to take a further journey before seeing her children. It had been considered expedient to send them north to Schwedt. A courier had arrived with a message from the King. "Where is the King?" asked Louisa. On the man's assuring her that he did not know, she inquired: "But is not the King with the army?" "The army: we have no army now," was the crushing reply.

Twenty years had come and gone since Mirabeau, commenting on the growing slackness of the Government of Frederick William II., had written: "The Prussian State is like a grand fairy palace. It will come to the earth with a sudden crash if its government do not undergo some revolution."<sup>1</sup> The prophecy was now fulfilled. The Government had remained substantially the same, and it collapsed together with the army. There was no one even in Berlin to take measures for defending the city, or precautions against panic.

When it became known that the Queen had returned, crowds gathered about the palace. They demanded to see her, they demanded details as to what had occurred. They manifested a pathetic confidence that with her coming all would yet be well. She sent them a kindly message and urged her need of rest. Her wish was still law to them, and they dispersed.

But for her there was to be no rest that night. The French, it was said, were making for the capital.

<sup>1</sup> *Secret History of the Court of Berlin.*

Early next morning she was hurried away from Berlin. With a wistful backward glance at the palace which had been her home, she exclaimed, Shall I ever cross its threshold again?"

At Schwedt she was awaited by her two elder boys. The younger children had already been sent still further north to Stettin. Her tears fell fast as her eyes rested on the eleven-year-old Crown Prince. Would there now be any crown whereto he might succeed?

The sorrow of the beautiful mother whom they half worshipped made a deep impression on the boyish minds. So also did the words in which she told them of the downfall of Prussia.

"I am weeping," she said, "because of the terrible trouble that has come to us. The King was mistaken about the strength of his army and the skill of its leaders; and so we have been beaten and must save ourselves by flight. You have seen, as it were, a stately edifice that great men have been gradually building up during the last two hundred years overthrown in a single day. There is now no Prussian army, no national glory. Oh, my sons, you are old enough to understand something of the greatness of the calamity that has overtaken us, and for which we grieve so sorely. At some future time, when perhaps your mother is no longer with you, call to mind this solemn hour, and how I wept for the humiliation of my Fatherland."

They were all weeping as she added: "But you

must not be satisfied with tears. You must work hard and grow strong in every way. Then perhaps Prussia's guardian genius will stand by you, and you will be enabled to free your people from insult, and shame, and reproach. You must seek to avenge on France this eclipse of the glory of your forefathers. Thus you will become worthy of the name of princes, worthy to belong to the race of Frederick the Great."

There is a companion picture to this of Queen Louisa's charge to her sons. It represents the younger of the two lads when, late in life, he has become King of Prussia. The country is on the eve of another struggle with France. But before leaving his capital for the headquarters of the army, William I. makes his way to the mausoleum at Charlottenburg. There, kneeling beside the tomb of his mother, he renews, in 1870, the solemn resolutions of that evening hour at Schwedt in 1806.

Accompanied by her sons, Louisa went on to Stettin. But it seemed as if there was to be no rest for the sole of her foot. The morning after her arrival brought a despatch from the King. He was at the fortress of Cüstrin on the Oder, fifty miles east of Berlin. He wished the Queen to join him there after arranging for their children to be sent to Danzig. To Danzig accordingly they went, under the care of Countess Voss, while Louisa once more turned her face southward.

She found her husband awaiting Napoleon's reply to his request for either a truce or conditions of

peace. Pending its arrival she was able to glean some particulars of the fatal encounter with the French. The King spoke warmly of the courage displayed by his brothers, William and Henry, though they had never been on active service before. From other lips the Queen heard of the bravery of Frederick William himself. He had shown no regard for his own safety; and when one horse was shot under him, he simply mounted another and continued fighting until further resistance was useless.

But he could not forget that the war was not of his choosing. When the results proved even worse than his despondent fancy had pictured them, his predominant feeling was not regret that more timely opportunities of taking up arms had been missed, but resentment towards the party that had forced his hand. His wife had no easy time of it, and Hardenberg, who accompanied her to Cüstrin, afterwards confided to Countess Voss that the King never once spoke to him. His Majesty had again come under the pernicious influence of Haugwitz and his coadjutors in the ministry.

Napoleon's answer was looked upon as a further revelation of evils proceeding from the abandonment of the policy of neutrality. He refused to agree to a truce and offered peace if Prussia would undertake to pay a heavy indemnity and to surrender not only Hanover, but all her possessions west of the Elbe save a strip of territory which included the fortress

city of Magdeburg. Even at this price Frederick William would have been glad to end the war. He sent to signify his acceptance of the conditions of peace. But before Napoleon was called upon to ratify the treaty, he had realised that, instead of securing a slice of Prussia, he might easily contrive to establish his supremacy over the whole country. The moral obliquity of the ruling classes had exposed the State to greater danger than the lost battles. At the first hint of disaster the civil and military officials, with a few noteworthy exceptions, had been ready to prostrate themselves at the feet of the conqueror. Prince Hohenlohe obscured the memory of a good day's work at Jena by suffering his army of 16,000 men to capitulate to a lesser body of the enemy's troops. Other military commanders followed this infamous example. Blücher alone won the esteem of his adversaries by gallant resistance. When at last he was driven to surrender, his signature of the agreement to capitulate was followed by the words : "I do this only because I have no food and no ammunition left".

On 27th October, Napoleon entered Berlin in triumph. His neighbourhood rendered it unlikely that the attack on Cüstrin would be long delayed. The King and Queen were urged to betake themselves to a place of greater security. A rapid journey across country brought them to the fortress of Gaudenz on the Vistula. Thither they were followed by a veritable stream of Job's messengers, each

with some new calamity to retail. The governor of Cüstrin had solemnly undertaken to guard that stronghold until he was reduced to the last extremity. Yet, within a week, he had yielded it up to a mere handful of French soldiers. His wife appears to have been the only individual in the fortress with a particle of spirit. As her spouse was hurrying off to betray his trust, he called to her for his helmet and dagger. Thereupon she is said to have flung his nightcap at him. No one would wish this story to be discredited.

Stettin and Glogau, the other fortresses on the Oder, were lost about the same time as Cüstrin. Nor was there any serious defence of Spandau, the guardian stronghold of the capital. On 8th November there followed the blackest treachery of all, the cowardly surrender of Magdeburg.

Neither Graudenz nor Danzig could now be considered safe, for the enemy was advancing rapidly into the heart of the country. The royal children were taken on to Königsberg. The unhappy King and Queen were gradually forced nearer and nearer to the eastern boundary of their realm. The time seemed not far distant when they would be obliged to take refuge on its farther side. They were ultimately reduced to the necessity of making shift with wretched accommodation at Ortelsberg in East Prussia. Here a remnant of the once celebrated army was encamped in readiness to co-operate with the Russians. That these troops could still be kept

in the field was due to the fidelity of Stein, the Minister of Finance. On hearing of Napoleon's victory, he promptly transferred to Königsberg the funds of the treasury and of the Bank of Prussia.

The Napoleonic entry into Berlin might be described as triumphant, yet it was anything but a popular demonstration. While the officials cringed before the invaders, the citizens in general looked on in silence, many of them weeping. They were restrained by habitual subjection to kings and those in authority from giving expression to the indignation aroused on hearing that the French Emperor had appropriated the sword and the orders worn by Frederick the Great. Hitherto these sacred relics had lain upon the tomb of the national hero. When they were sent off to Paris, and the column commemorating Frederick's triumph over the French was removed from the battlefield of Rossbach, it might well be said that the glory had departed from Prussia.

The conqueror anticipated no further opposition to his projects on the part of his opponent. He chose to assume that, in declaring war, Frederick William had been led astray by the evil counsels of Queen Louisa and Alexander of Russia. But, lest this should occur again, measures were to be taken to forcibly restrain the King from persevering in a policy of antagonism to France.

In the first place, Napoleon determined to obtain control of the internal resources of Prussia. He

therefore refused to sign the treaty of peace, and reverted to the proposal of a truce. Meantime his soldiers continued to occupy the country. The next step was to put an end to the possibility of an active alliance between Prussia on the one hand and England or Russia on the other. On 27th November Napoleon issued his famous Berlin Decrees, designed, as he phrased it, "to conquer the sea by the land". In other words, he proposed to ruin British commerce by excluding from the ports of France and her allies all ships coming from the British Isles or British colonies. Prussia, though still nominally at war with France, was to be forced to close her ports at the bidding of the Emperor, and take her stand among the enemies of Britain.

To dissolve the alliance between Prussia and Russia was likely to be a matter of greater difficulty. As champion of the Prussian monarch, the Czar was preparing to enter on a fresh struggle with France. Napoleon, however, had a third object in view. There is no greater testimony to the wonderful influence of Queen Louisa than the fact that he found it a more serious obstacle to the subjugation of Prussia than the army of Frederick the Great, and that he thought it worth while to devise a scheme for the purpose of discrediting her in the eyes of the nation and, at the same time, terminating the friendship between the Czar and the Prussian royal family.

From the battlefield of Jena he betook himself

to the palace at Weimar. There he dictated the first of a notorious series of bulletins, intended rather for publication in a suborned Prussian newspaper than for the enlightenment of the people of France. In these documents the Queen is represented as the main instigator of the disastrous war, and her name is so incessantly coupled with that of Alexander of Russia that anyone ignorant of her real character would have suspected the nature of their intimacy.

The reverse side of Napoleon's genius was never more clearly exhibited than in this unwarranted attack on one of the noblest women of the age. His panegyrist, Thiers, puts things very mildly when he states that "the bulletins published in Prussia were most ungenerous towards the Queen, and betrayed with too little reserve the licentiousness of the victorious soldier, thereby exposing Napoleon to more than one censure amidst the shouts of admiration which his triumphs drew from his enemies themselves".

A bulletin dated two days after the contest of Jena contains the statement that "the Queen never ceased to urge the King and his generals to give battle. Blood she would have, and the best blood in the country has been poured out at her behest." Succeeding bulletins repeat the accusation with ingenious variation of detail. From Weimar came the further announcement that "The French have captured about sixty standards, some of which had been presented by the great Frederick to his soldiers. The ensign of the Guards and that of the Queen's

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Regiment were embroidered by Her Majesty's own hands. The truth about her seems to be that she is a woman with a taking face but with little intelligence. She is wholly incapable of foreseeing the consequences of her actions. But she should now be commiserated rather than blamed. For she must needs be filled with remorse when she considers the evils she has brought upon her country, and the balefulness of her influence over the King, her husband. By general consent the latter appears to be a most worthy man, whose one desire was peace and the welfare of his people."

A still later bulletin announces that "every one is saying what a singular thing it is that the Emperor Napoleon has come to Potsdam, and installed himself in the very apartments occupied by the Czar when, in the course of his travels last year, he paid his fatal visit to Prussia. From the moment of his arrival the Queen neglected her domestic duties and the serious business of her toilet—*les graves occupations de la toilette*—in order to mix herself up with affairs of state, to bring her adverse influence to bear on her husband's mind and to communicate to others the passion for war which had taken possession of her own breast. The more healthy minded section of the nation look upon this visit of Alexander's as one of the greatest misfortunes that ever befel Prussia."

And again : "The result of the famous oath sworn by the tomb of Frederick the Great was the Battle

of Austerlitz and the speedy evacuation of Germany by the Russian army. Twenty-four hours after the midnight vow, there appeared an engraving of the scene which is on view in all the shops of Berlin. The very peasants are convulsed with laughter at the sight of it. It shows the handsome Czar of Russia with the Queen beside him, while the King is laying his hand on the tomb of Frederick. The Queen has a shawl thrown about her, and recalls the London pictures of Lady Hamilton as, with her hand on her heart, she turns towards the Czar. . . . By this time everybody knows that the Queen is responsible for all the woes that have come upon the nation. Everywhere people are saying, ‘She was so good, so gentle only a year ago, but what a change in her since the fatal visit of the Czar Alexander’. In her room at Potsdam there has been found a portrait of him presented to the Queen by himself.” And so on, and so on.

“Was it not enough for Napoleon to deprive the King of his dominions, that he must also seek to sully the reputation of his wife?” was Louisa’s indignant exclamation when first she heard of the incriminating bulletins. But she was not proof against their depressing influence, which led her to question her own motives and wonder if she had not, involuntarily, been to blame for the ruin of her country. It is pitiful to find how few authoritative voices protested against the infamy of her persecution. She had no difficulty in re-

remembering the names of her knights, as she called her public defenders. The King knew too well the whole course of her friendship with the Czar to attach the slightest credence to the more offensive innuendoes. But he was naturally exasperated at their publication and at being himself held up to ridicule as the puppet of his wife.

As he shifted his quarters from town to village, he was accompanied by representatives of the Powers from whom Napoleon had resolved to separate him, that is to say, by the Russian ambassador, Baron de Krüdener, and Queen Louisa's devoted admirer, George Jackson, who was acting in place of the British envoy. On 30th November, 1806, the latter writes from the headquarters at Ortelsberg : "Provisions are hardly more abundant here than at the last village. We get hardly any meat ; the water is of the worst kind, and there is no possibility of procuring any wine as a corrective. Yet, taking one thing with another, we struggle on tolerably well, and have, I think, some reason to be satisfied when we know that the poor Queen—whose dignified resignation and the nobleness of character she displays under these trying and distressing circumstances render her more interesting than does even her great beauty—has, literally, only a small scantily furnished room, on the ground floor of one of the wretched barns they call houses, which one can hardly step out of without getting up to the ankles in mud.

For, although the weather hitherto has been so exceptionally mild, yet it is damp, and the village is one of the dirtiest.

"The King takes a morning walk while their room, which like our own, serves for sitting and bedroom, is arranged for their Majesties' breakfast.

"Since I came here I have seen the Queen only once to speak to. She said little, but that little in her amiable and affable manner. She is obliged to be very cautious, both in her words and in her actions, for the King is of an excessive ill-humour and turns a deaf ear to all she says. She, however, does not allow herself to be discouraged and loses no opportunity of endeavouring to counteract the counsels of Köckeritz and his associates."

She had indeed no sympathy with those who were willing that Prussia should still be dragged at the chariot wheels of Napoleon, and would have been glad if her husband had seen fit to give a free hand to such statesmen as Stein and Hardenberg who, she believed, would put the interests of the country before their own.

But experience had not yet taught Frederick William the danger of partial reforms. He ignored the claims of Hardenberg, and was offended because Stein refused to collaborate with certain of His Majesty's former advisers. Conferences were held, but they had resulted in a condition of deadlock when, early on 9th December, Queen

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Louisa set out for Königsberg. There her third son, Carl, had been lying ill with typhoid fever. But she was received with the assurance that the crisis was past and the child likely to recover. On the evening of the same day Countess Voss wrote but one line in her diary : "The Queen came at 12 o'clock. I am almost beside myself for joy." It was short-lived joy. Before the King's unexpected appearance on the following afternoon it had become evident that his wife was far from well. In her case also the illness proved to be typhoid, doubtless attributable to the impure drinking-water of Ortelberg.

The closing weeks of the year 1806 were the darkest in the annals of the Hohenzollern dynasty. The Queen seemed to be steadily losing ground. Her despondent husband made up his mind that some inexorable fate was waiting to deal him the final blow. He forbade any celebration of Christmas in the castle. But the kindly old Countess got together a few gifts for his disappointed children. The new year had dawned before their mother was fairly out of danger. By that time a fresh difficulty had arisen. It was rumoured that the French were advancing towards Königsberg.

## CHAPTER XI

### QUEEN LOUISA AT MEMEL AND KÖNIGSBERG. THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1807

**N**APOLEON'S mastery of Central Europe was not put altogether beyond dispute even by the campaign of Jena. He had still to reckon with a formidable army of Russians, hovering on the borders of their own country, whence they could readily draw supplies and reinforcements. Moreover, the Austrians, whom he had treated with impolitic severity after the Battle of Austerlitz, were merely biding their time to resume the offensive. Any signal advantage gained by the forces of the Czar would furnish the Emperor Francis with an opportunity he would scarcely let slip of falling upon the rear of the French army.

In face of this contingency, it became a leading object with Napoleon to interpose a friendly Poland between Austria and the province of East Prussia where the battles of the next campaign were likely to be fought. When, therefore, a deputation of Poles came to Berlin beseeching him to restore their kingdom and become its suzerain, he held out hopes that their desire might be accomplished ; consequently he

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met with no opposition when he proceeded to occupy Warsaw and the surrounding region. After an indecisive contest with the Russians under General Bennigsen at Pultusk, Napoleon fell back into winter quarters on the Vistula. The French soldiers seen in the vicinity of Danzig and Königsberg during the closing days of the year 1806 belonged to isolated bodies of troops sent to scour the country in search of provisions. But their appearance led to apprehensions of an impending advance of Napoleon and his Grand Army.

During the first week of the new year the children of the King and Queen of Prussia were sent on to Memel. There was anxious debating as to what should be done with the helpless Queen. Was she to face the risk of death from exposure to the intense cold of that bleak region, or the possibility of finding herself for a time in the power of the French Emperor? Louisa speedily made it plain that, as far as she was concerned, there could be no consideration of alternatives. "I choose to fall into the hands of God," she said, "rather than into the hands of that man."

Like Frederick II. she was "great especially in critical moments," and her spirits rose at the mere prospect of the difficulties to be encountered. She even contrived to hold a pen long enough to send a reassuring message to her father. It was no ordinary typhoid patient who five days after the crisis of her illness could write: "I am astonishingly well,

my best of fathers. The fever lasted twenty-one days. I suffered much, for this particular disease especially affects the nervous system. I am just taking myself off to Memel. My carriage has been turned into a bed. Hufeland (the court physician) will accompany me. With God's help, I hope to arrive at my destination in four days. . . . Adieu, my dearest father. God bless you and your country."

The letter ended, the writer was wrapped in blankets and carried to her extemporised bed. The toilsome journey of a hundred and fifty miles began. Sometimes the invalid's coach had to pass over sheets of ice. Sometimes it was almost within reach of the stormy sea. In past years it had been "roses, roses all the way," when Queen Louisa visited the northern provinces of Prussia. Now she was glad to find a night's shelter in a comfortless room where the snow-flakes drifted through a broken window on to her bed. Yet, to the surprise and relief of her attendants, her health actually improved as she journeyed onwards, and her calm confidence that all would be well kept the courage of the little company from flagging. At last, "just as we came in sight of Memel," writes Hufeland, "the sun broke through the clouds for the first time and, with mild radiance, illumined the town where there awaited us a place of rest. We took the dispersion of the clouds for a good omen."

Cheered by this glint of sunshine, the Queen was

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able to face the trying moment when, her journey ended, she found herself installed in the very house that had been placed at the King's disposal five years before. Everything served to remind her of pleasant incidents of the Czar's first visit to Prussia. It was no small consolation to the sufferer that, despite the iniquitous bulletins, there was apparently no change in Alexander's friendly feeling for herself and the King.

Long before Her Majesty had recovered her wonted strength, her hands and brain were busy as ever in the service of her family and her country. For a whole year Memel remained the headquarters of the Prussian monarch. The little town was constantly filled to overflowing with military officers, wounded soldiers, the faithful few amongst the representatives of government departments, relatives of the King and Queen, and refugees of every description. To secure the barest necessities of life was often a serious problem. It was a red letter day in the royal household when a neighbouring proprietor sent a present of game or a fisherman appeared with an offering for which he had toiled all night. There are touching stories of country folks, whose own means of subsistence had become painfully scanty, coming to bring gifts of farm or dairy produce to their Queen. Such tokens of continued esteem and loyalty were unspeakably precious to her. There were times enough when the echoes of Napoleon's slanders caused her acute suffering, times

when she says, "I could only sigh and swallow down my tears". But it gave her courage to go forward on her uphill path when she found that, amongst the people generally, her indictment had evoked no feeling but incredulous astonishment and unbounded indignation.

Lack of suitable and sufficient nourishment accounts to some extent for the frequent recurrence of illness in the royal family during the sojourn at Memel. Cases of measles, typhoid and scarlet fever kept the Queen in constant anxiety about her boys and girls. But in the early months of 1807 her chief concern was for her husband. That lover of privacy and routine, who had been rather the conscientious drudge of the State than its first servant, was prostrated in body and mind by the incessant demand either for vigorous action or heroic endurance. While grievously disappointed in the failure of his efforts to exorcise the spirit of wickedness in high places, he was reluctant to break away entirely from the past and surround himself with reforming statesmen, who, far from seeing eye to eye with him, would expect him to surrender his will to theirs. Of Stein's power of initiative he had a positive dread. Before leaving Königsberg he dismissed, in no very courteous fashion, his most upright and able minister.

But, for all his errors of judgment, Frederick William was not left without one faithful counsellor. In the December days of 1806, when the issue of his wife's illness was uncertain, he came to under-

stand something of what it would mean to face the future without her, and turned with renewed affection and confidence to the friend who had never failed from his side. Later on, when his own strength gave way, no voice but hers could rouse him from the apathetic indifference to everything which, for a time, alarmed his associates. To her alone it was due that he was gradually won back to health and interest in life.

Queen Louisa's power of making sunshine in shady places was not allied with incapacity to apprehend the increasing seriousness of the political situation. In the battle fought at Eylau near Königsberg, February 7 and 8, 1807, victory certainly inclined to the side of Russia and Prussia. But that only made the indecisive result of the desperate combat the more lamentable. On this occasion there was, however, no cause to be ashamed of the part played by the Prussian contingent. Its movements were directed in accordance with the counsels of Scharnhorst, to whom the re-organisation of the whole military system of Prussia was soon to be entrusted. The loss of life on both sides was appalling. Both armies were temporarily reduced to inactivity. But since it was obvious that the allies could bring forward reserve forces more rapidly than the French, Napoleon ordered General Bertrand to proceed to Memel with an offer of favourable conditions of peace to Frederick William as the price of his withdrawal from the Russian alliance.

Having made known his errand to the King of Prussia, Bertrand had the audacity to insist on a separate interview with Queen Louisa, in order to acquaint her with Napoleon's request that her influence should be exerted on the side of peace and friendship with France. Her somewhat prim reply, "It is not for women to express opinions when peace or war is being decided," contrasts oddly with the emphatic "*Never*," which was her comment on the proposal when it actually came up for discussion. She had little enough reason to trust the promises of the French Emperor, and to desert an ally at a critical juncture would, she maintained, be dishonouring to the King and to the nation. Opposed to her were two representatives of the former government. But her side was also the side of Hardenberg, who, mainly through her influence, had been restored to favour and appointed to the headship of the State. Hardenberg's advice finally decided the King to set aside considerations of momentary expediency, and Napoleon's terms were rejected.

Prussia thus retained the friendship of Russia, and, in conjunction with Russia, worked out her salvation in the long run. But the immediate consequence of the policy of disinterestedness was Napoleon's determination to possess himself of the hitherto unconquered province of East Prussia, so as to deprive Frederick William of his last foothold on the soil of the kingdom to which he had been born. About the end of February, 1807, the French laid

siege to Danzig and Graudenz, the fortresses on the lower Vistula, and to Colberg, the only stronghold on the Baltic by which Prussia retained communication with England and Sweden.

Experience had led the enemy to expect that they would have little difficulty in gaining possession of these fortresses. Colberg certainly had a narrow escape of falling into their hands before the siege could be said to have actually begun. It was, however, saved to Prussia by the courage and determination of one brave man. When the first French cannon balls struck the fortifications the worthless commandant announced to the citizens that if the firing continued they would be forced to surrender. Thereupon an old sea captain, named Nettelbeck, pointed a pistol at the speaker and declared his intention of shooting him or any other man who should repeat the cowardly suggestion. The citizens rallied to the side of Nettelbeck, and it was not found possible to carry out the commandant's order for his arrest. The patriots then despatched a petition to the King requesting him to send them a governor who would not surrender. For once Frederick William was equal to the occasion. The commandant of Colberg was superseded by Gneisenau, an officer in whom open-mindedness and originality had been fostered by a sojourn in America. With Gneisenau to guard the fortress, with Schill, the most brilliant young officer in the Prussian army, to harass the enemy by continual sorties, and

with old Nettelbeck to superintend the commissariat department, there was no more talk of the surrender of Colberg.

The French did indeed contrive to get possession of Danzig, but only after prolonged resistance on the part of the garrison. Their attempt to intimidate Von Courbière, the commandant of Graudenz, by announcing that the Prussian King had ceased to reign, merely elicited the memorable reply: "Then I am King of Graudenz, and I do not intend to surrender". Incidents such as these, together with Scharnhorst's achievements at Eylau, went far to redeem the character of the Prussian soldier.

The month of April found the Czar once more in Memel. He had journeyed westward in order to supervise the reinforcement of the Russian army. The pathos of meeting Frederick William and his consort under their sadly changed circumstances appealed strongly to Alexander's impressionable nature. He consoled his friends by renewed protestations of goodwill. He induced them to quit for a time their depressing surroundings and accompany him to Kydullen. There he proposed that the King should hold an inspection of the Russian Imperial Guards. Queen Louisa's personal enjoyment of Alexander's society was marred by dread lest the enemy should be on the outlook for a fresh occasion to blaspheme. Yet, for the sake of all it betokened to her husband and her country, she was filled with thankfulness that the meeting had taken place. The

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future assumed a less forbidding aspect when she saw the Czar embracing his ally in the presence of the enthusiastic troops and heard him exclaim : " This much is certain, we will not fall singly. If we must go down, we will go down together."

Frederick William decided to remain with Alexander. Hardenberg, who had accompanied the King to Kydullen, took steps to make the alliance between Russia and Prussia the basis of a new European coalition. Queen Louisa set out for Königsberg whence she could more easily follow the course of events than at Memel. The letter in which she announces her arrival to Countess Voss gives a vivid picture of the difficulties and dangers which beset travellers, even royal travellers, a century ago.

" KÖNIGSBERG, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1807.

" Dear Voto,<sup>1</sup> I am here by the special intervention of Providence. Nothing short of a miracle kept me from perishing on the way. I have paid dearly for the delightful visit to Kydullen, since it necessitated the most horrible journey in the whole course of my existence, by roads such as I never had any conception of until, unfortunately, I had to traverse them. At the risk of my life I had to pass near rivers which had overflowed their banks. For a time my carriage was entombed in the middle of the highway and two

<sup>1</sup> Voto and Boto were pet names of Countess Voss. They probably represent a child's first attempts to pronounce the old lady's name.

horses disappeared in the mud. Only by the exertion of tremendous force was it found possible to rescue human beings and animals from the grimy abyss. It was three days before I arrived here more dead than alive after the discomfort and fatigue of the journey, the cold to which I was exposed in the open carriage which was all I could procure at Kydullen, the gloomy weather, the rain and wind in my face. It was several days before I began to recover. Alas, my strength is not what it used to be. The Lord be thanked that I have got through without a return of illness. I immediately sat down and wrote to the King that I must remain here until I could travel to Memel without jeopardising my life."

During this visit to Königsberg Louisa did not reside at the castle, but in a private dwelling where her youngest sister had taken up her abode. For the first time since Frederica's marriage to Prince Solms, the two who had grown up together enjoyed a period of prolonged intercourse. Princess Solms became a leading member of an association formed by the Queen for the care of the wounded who had been brought into the city after the Battle of Eylau. Her Majesty describes the Königsberg of those days as "a terrible place by reason of the multitudes of suffering creatures who were not walking but literally crawling about". As long as she remained in the ancient capital, Louisa took an active part in the work of relief. In visiting the more serious cases, she was sometimes accompanied by Madame de

Krüdener, the wife of the Russian ambassador. There are few more interesting chapters of biography than that which tells of the conversion of this brilliant but somewhat unstable character, and of her subsequent wanderings through the countries of Europe proclaiming to high and low alike the need of repentance, and of walking "in the royal road of the soul". The fearlessness and undoubted earnestness of Madame de Krüdener, which attracted Queen Louisa in 1807, were afterwards to make a still more profound impression on the Czar Alexander.

Another visitor to Königsberg was General Blücher, who had been exchanged for Marshal Victor. The King of Sweden had promised assistance to Prussia, and the general was on his way to Pomerania to take command of the Swedish auxiliaries. Louisa had a great regard for the veteran warrior, a Mecklenburger like herself. On 15th May, 1807, she wrote to her father: "The departure of General Blücher furnishes me with a safe opportunity of speaking openly to you. How long it is since I have known this happiness! How many things I have to say to you . . . The Battle of Eylau had very important results. And, although the allies did not make the most of their advantage, the immobility of the French during the past three months is a sure sign that they were too reduced in numbers to think of fresh conquests. . . . Now, with the return of spring and the revival of nature, patriotism also seems to be awakening in every Prussian

breast. The activity manifest on all hands, the sending of our excellent Blücher to Pomerania, the number of new battalions which have been formed during recent months, are things which inspire me with hope. More than all that, the wonderful friendship between the King and the Czar, the definite course now being followed in politics, the reinstatement of Hardenberg are a source of joy and confidence. Yes, dearest father, I am convinced that all will yet go well, and that a happy meeting is in store for us. The siege of Danzig proceeds most satisfactorily. Graudenz and Colberg are holding out with equal valour. God be thanked that once again we have to do with men animated by a sense of honour and a sense of duty, for miscreants enough have been forced upon our notice. As long as we were suffering the unavoidable consequences of a military reverse, I did not lose heart. It was not the first battle that had been lost, and we could hope to retrieve our misfortune. But when we were called upon to contend with the depravity of men, then, I must confess, I was in despair, for there seemed to be no one whom we could trust. But enough of bygone evils. Let us look upward to Him who has the ordering of our ways, and who will never forsake us, if we do not forsake Him. How deeply I was touched by your remembrance of the 10th of March. I kiss your hands for all your goodness. I kiss grandmamma and the brothers. Always your faithful child, and (may I not also add?) your friend Louisa."

A fortnight later the sky was again overcast. To her brother George the Queen pours out her grief that the Russian commander had not taken steps to prevent the fall of Danzig. "I cannot possibly tell you all that I felt as I read your letters," she writes. "Like the unfortunate Mary, I can surely say, 'I have been greatly loved'!<sup>1</sup> I trust there may be a happy issue to our troubles; but, dearest George, there are moments when one's courage sinks and the heart is flooded with sorrow. Such a moment is the present. Danzig, Danzig is lost to us. Since yesterday the town has been in the hands of the French—in those cruel and beyond everything hateful hands. The fair hopes that I shared with the best of fathers have vanished utterly. It is maddening. The place might have been saved if Bennigsen had made a slight diversion to draw off the attention of the besiegers. . . . His apathy is simply indescribable. . . . He talks of fighting a pitched battle between to-day and the day after to-morrow. I do not believe him. What I do believe is that some evilly disposed individual has got the upper hand with him. He has won two battles and thereby secured all the orders of the Russian Empire. His huge pension has been augmented by twelve thousand roubles. That is probably enough for a man, so called because he is going about on two legs. But he who is not penetrated through and through with the

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Schiller's *Maria Stuart*.

great conception that what is at stake is the future of mankind, the freedom of the world, whereof Prussia is only a part, the happiness and independence of unborn generations ; he, I say, who does not feel all this stirring him to the noblest enthusiasm, will accomplish nothing—O, noble enthusiasm, what has become of you ? Where are the generals who made themselves immortal in the Seven Years' War ? I am beside myself, I admit it. But think and feel and understand. . . .

" Now let us turn to a more enlivening subject. Your conjecture that Frederica and I would be together when your letter to me arrived proved quite correct. By the luckiest chance in the world, we have been enjoying each other's society since 12th April. Until lately we were as happy as it was possible to be under the present circumstances. Yet I often said, ' Frederica, I do not regard this pleasurable time as compensation for the days wherein I have seen evil, but as a means of laying up strength against the dark days yet to come '. How truly I spoke. The first blow has fallen. Others will surely follow. Still, do not think of me as of one lying prone upon the earth, unable to raise her head. God helping me, my courage will not fail. . . . Each succeeding wave of adversity threatens to overwhelm me, yet, when it recedes, I somehow manage to regain my footing."

Queen Louisa's indignant utterances with regard to Bennigsen's failure to prevent the capitulation of

Danzig are not the words of one grown wise after the event. She had foreseen the danger and sent an urgent message to the Czar, pointing out that a forward movement of the Russian army would probably compel Napoleon to recall or reduce the force besieging the stronghold. Again she wrote, not to reproach Alexander for the want of practical response to her representations, but to tell him of her grief and to suggest that Bennigsen should be superseded by a more capable general. Her views on the military situation coincided to some extent with Alexander's own. Unfortunately he did not realise the need of promptitude in replacing his dilatory commander. While Frederick William rejoined his wife, the Czar proceeded to Tilsit in order to await the arrival of certain reserve forces. There he received another letter from Louisa, dated 10th June. This time it was not the Queen but the woman who addressed him :—

“ To-day,” she wrote, “ is the fifth anniversary of your coming to Memel when the King and I saw you for the first time. It is impossible to tell you all I feel as I recall the moment of our meeting and your brief but happy sojourn with us. From that time forward you have always been the same. Your steadfast friendship is our sole hope now. Bonaparte never did a more cruel thing than when he contrived the means of keeping you and me apart and of depriving me of the pleasure of being your hostess in my own country. I shall continue to resent his

brutality all the time that you are at Tilsit. To think that it would have been my duty to be there but for this monster who does not scruple to disturb the most innocent relationships! But I am only one of many victims who are feeling the terrible pressure of his iron hand. Do not forget that it was from Tilsit that I wrote to you for the first time." Queen Louisa little imagined that, within a month, she would be on her way to Tilsit, there to meet not only her correspondent but the man whose hand pressed so heavily on herself and on her country.

Her distrust of Bennigsen was amply justified. During Alexander's absence from his army his blundering general suffered himself to be entrapped and defeated by Napoleon at Friedland on 14th June. By that date Frederick William and his consort had returned to Memel. The tide in their affairs had reached its lowest ebb when the Queen penned the following epistle to her father :—

"With the deepest emotion and with tears of gratitude I read the letter written by you in the month of April. How can I thank you, dearest, tenderest father, for the many tokens of your love, your graciousness, your indescribable fatherly goodness. What a consolation you are to me in my troubles, what a well-spring of fortitude! When one is so much loved as I am, it is impossible to be utterly downcast, even though another overwhelming misfortune has befallen us, and we are on the eve of leaving the country, it may be for ever.

What this means to me you can imagine. But I beseech you not to misapprehend your daughter. Never think of me as a poor-spirited thing going about hanging her head. The power to rise above my troubles I derive from two sources : first, the belief that we are not the sport of Fate, but beings upheld and guided by the hand of God ; second, the conviction that there is nothing dishonourable about our final overthrow. In no single particular could the King have acted otherwise than he has done, without proving untrue to himself and a traitor to his people. How comforting this reflection is to me, those only can understand whose love of honour is a ruling passion.

"But let me tell you what has occurred. On 7th June Bennigsen began to move forward. On the 14th he encountered the enemy. The battle which ensued was a most disastrous one for him. The French surrounded his left wing and intercepted his retreat by setting fire to the town of Friedland. In consequence of this untoward event, Königsberg has fallen into the hands of the enemy. Bennigsen is still being pursued although he has reached Tilsit, only about fifty miles from here. My children and I are, therefore, under the necessity of forsaking Memel as soon as the danger becomes imminent. The King is going to confer with the Czar as to the next step. My future destination will be Riga. God will sustain me in the terrible moment when I shall have to cross the

frontier of my kingdom. Great will be my need of strength, but I will look to Him who controls the powers of good and evil. I firmly believe that He will lay upon us no heavier burden than we can bear. . . . I am always your most obedient, your fervently loving daughter, and—thank God that you have given me the right to add—your friend Louisa."

"24th June.—My letters are still here, for winds and waves are alike contrary. It has been impossible for ships to put out to sea. I am sending by a sure hand, and may therefore continue to give you our news. Bennigsen has crossed the Niemen and concluded a four weeks' truce. The Russians are utterly disorganised and are sighing for the olive branch. In all probability it will be accorded to them and to us as well. But I doubt it will not be the kind of branch that puts forth leaves and blossoms. True, the clouds sometimes disappear when we least expect it. They may do so now. No one could wish it more fervently than I do, but I can no longer hope. Let this letter speak for me to you. In it I have put my very heart and soul, and you can feel that you know me without reserve. So long as my feet are in the way of righteousness, I can live on bread and salt or I can die, but I shall never be wholly wretched. Only I can no longer hope. Those who have been cast down from their heaven, as I have been, cease from hoping. Should happiness be our portion in the future, no one will meet it and rejoice in it more thankfully than I, but I can

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no longer hope for it. Should further misfortunes befall us, they may give me a momentary shock ; but, so long as we have nothing to reproach ourselves with, they will not break my spirit. . . . The King rejoined the Czar yesterday. They will both go on to Tauroggen, only a few miles from Tilsit, where Napoleon is now staying."

It is characteristic of Queen Louisa that her postscript is not so much a dirge of hope as a refusal to entertain false hopes. If she had little expectation that she and her husband would be restored to their former position, she continued to cherish very great hope for the future of Prussia and of the German Fatherland as a whole.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PEACE OF TILSIT. QUEEN LOUISA AND NAPOLEON

IT was consistent with Queen Louisa's desire to spare her father's feelings as much as possible that, in writing to him, she passes lightly over the subject of the armistice, and adds no second postscript under date of 22nd June. Yet, before that stormy day came to a close, she had received a communication from her husband confirming the rumour of an impending truce and intimating that Prussia would be called upon to admit French garrisons into three fortresses as a pledge of good faith. If this preposterous demand were to be withdrawn, an interview between the King and Napoleon might be needful. "Seductive prospect," comments the depressed monarch. "I shudder to think of it, and yet I see clearly that it will be unavoidable. What is more, you will remember that I always said it would come to this."

His wife might have rejoined that she too had foretold many undesirable events and that they had come to pass because her warnings had not been heeded. But she disregards the petty remark.

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What concerned her was the ominous aspect of the political horizon. While the sole hope for the future lay in the continuance of the war, the King had been left with no option but to follow the example of his ally and sue for an armistice as a preliminary to the ending of the struggle. His wife comprehended all the difficulties of his position, his chagrin in perceiving that, notwithstanding generous impulses and dramatic vows, there were limits to the Czar's capacity for identifying himself with the fortunes of his friend, as well as his own tendency to go back on the past and regret that he had been dissuaded from pursuing his advantage to the detriment of Russia. She felt keenly for both King and country. She remembered especially the soldiers who had fallen in the war and those who were still holding out in Colberg and Graudenz, two of the fortresses demanded by Napoleon. Then, taking up her pen, she wrote: "Your letter, my dear one, fell from my hands as I read it, so startled was I by the news it contained. It was enough to bring despair to the strongest, most perfectly tempered mind. Are we indeed reduced to this after the loss of so many brave lives—lives laid down for nothing at all, lives sacrificed to stupidity, incapacity and ill-will to our cause? What a stipulation is that which is to serve as the basis of the armistice! And if the truce is to prove so costly, what are we to expect of the peace? Furthermore, we have to face the probability of your having to interview that monster.



KING FREDERICK WILLIAM III  
AFTER A PORTRAIT IN THE HOHENZOLLERN MUSEUM, BERLIN



That is too much to ask. Fancy your having to meet the originator of all our woes, the scourge of the earth, the quintessence of everything infamous and wicked, and to be obliged to dissemble, to appear cheerful and even friendly! Will heaven never cease to punish us? At the moment I feel more charitably disposed towards the poor Czar. It was surely from motives of delicacy that he contrived to separate me from you and from himself. I, at least, will be spared the sight of the monster; since his affection for me will not likely bring him across the sands of the Nehrung to pay me a visit.

"General Obreskow has just left me. He came from Tilsit and said, by word of mouth, very much what you said in your letter. . . . I was alarmed by his remark that the Grand Duke Constantine had managed things very sensibly. Great Heavens!

"Zastrow, old Voss and the whole noisy crew of them have gone on board ship.<sup>1</sup> But the wind is contrary and it is four days since any vessel left the harbour.

"The Emperor Alexander has grieved me beyond description. To think of all his good intentions being frustrated by that abominable Bennigsen. Why does he not have him shot or at least superseded in the command of the army? It is too bad not to do anything."

Alexander, however, had let himself be persuaded

<sup>1</sup> Zastrow and Voss were ministers who opposed Hardenberg and were therefore in disfavour with the Queen.

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that it would serve no purpose to appoint another general in place of Bennigsen. His whole army was disheartened and disorganised. He had other plausible reasons for his change of front. To prolong the strife appeared to many of his subjects a useless and Quixotic proceeding. His father's fate was a warning as to what might befall an unpopular Czar, and the party that clamoured for peace had found an able leader in Alexander's brother, the Grand Duke Constantine. Still the Czar was prepared to do more than merely treat with Napoleon on his own account. As a means of quieting his conscience with regard to his desertion of Frederick William, he undertook to try and obtain favourable terms of peace for Prussia.

At the very outset it became apparent that this would be no easy matter. The victor of Friedland had found temporary quarters in the Prussian town of Tilsit. The Czar was still in Russian Poland. The chosen intermediary was the Grand Duke Constantine. Queen Louisa might well be dismayed at the Russian general's reference to the Duke in this connection. With his unconcealed admiration for Napoleon, he was certainly no fit representative of Prussian interests. This was attested by the extraordinary demand for the surrender of the fortresses. But a more hopeful letter from the King to his wife told her of a conference which had been held between himself and Hardenberg on the one hand, and the Czar and his plenipotentiary

Budberg on the other. Alexander had expressed his confidence that their mutual interests would be safeguarded and everything satisfactorily settled by personal dealings with Napoleon.

"Give my homage to the Emperor Alexander," says Queen Louisa in reply. "I pity him much. In his efforts to give effect to his good intentions, he is badly seconded. He can do nothing so long as he has to contend with that horde of ill-disposed creatures headed by the Grand Duke Constantine. If Napoleon desires peace on his own account, he may perchance let us off cheaply. But he is a man with no sense of justice."

For some reason or other the Czar arrived in Tauroggen a few hours earlier than his guest. This circumstance Napoleon promptly turned to his own advantage by requesting and obtaining the imperial subscription to the terms of the armistice between France and Russia. The next day the King and the Czar went on to Picktupöhnen, a little village on the right bank of the Niemen, nearly opposite to Tilsit. From his lodging in the schoolhouse, the King sent his wife a letter which marks the opening of another gloomy chapter in the history of Prussia. It was written during the evening of 25th June, 1807.

"To-day's events were so extraordinary and so big with future possibilities that I do not see how I am to describe them to you in detail. I will, however, make an attempt, on the understanding that

you will excuse any want of coherence in this summary. For my part I hardly know what to think.

"The day before yesterday I spent ten hours in travelling sixteen miles through this infernal Russian Poland. Towards midnight I arrived at Tauroggen and learned from the Czar's own lips that he had just ratified the famous armistice of which you have heard already. To avoid delay he signed it himself without waiting for Budberg. In this agreement which applies solely to Russia, it is set forth that Prussia will likewise be granted four or five days in which to make necessary arrangements. Most amiable of them, is it not? It was ten o'clock at night when the Russian ratification was handed to Bonaparte, and at one in the morning Duroc brought the counterfoil to General Bennigsen. What unseemly haste on both sides! There is no doubt that the Grand Duke played a prominent and very questionable part in the whole affair. . . . Bennigsen has now changed his tune and speaks of nothing but war. What is one to make of an individual like that? He thinks himself more formidable than ever, but he is the only person who holds that opinion. Duroc arrived yesterday evening and had an audience with the Czar, in the course of which he invited him to an interview with Napoleon to-day. The Czar accepted, and this afternoon set out for the Tilsit bridge. It has been burnt down; but Bonaparte has had a sort of raft constructed in the mid-stream of the river. On this there is a pavilion, and

the two emperors (not your humble servant, he will have that felicity to-morrow) set out from the opposite banks at the same time. I watched the proceedings from a distance so that I might learn how to act my part properly. I put on my Russian cloak and took up my position with the Russian officers on the margin of the river. While I waited I listened to Kalckreuth's report of his doings in Tilsit yesterday afternoon. He was sent there to negotiate the armistice in so far as it concerned our troops. But no progress has been made. Kalckreuth encountered difficulties innumerable. Amongst other things Napoleon insists absolutely on the recognition of his claim to take possession of the three fortresses. Above all, he demands the dismissal of Hardenberg and Rüchel from the ministry, saying that he would rather make war with us for forty years than treat with men in whom he could not possibly place any confidence! I immediately had this information passed on to the Czar, as he had promised to advocate my cause. My messenger reached him just before he got into his boat. In the distance I caught sight of the being who seems to exist merely to carry death and destruction everywhere. Would to heaven that I need never see him nearer. I cannot tell you how strangely his aspect affected me. The interview lasted two whole hours. The weather was deplorable, but I waited to hear the upshot of the conference. As soon as he returned the Czar came to give me his report of what had transpired on the

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raft. He could not say enough about Napoleon, who appeared to him a very strange and mysterious creature, coldly reserved but very polite. After an obstinate conflict of opinion, it was conceded to the Czar that the three Prussian fortresses should not be surrendered to the French during the armistice. In obtaining this he has done us a great service. Speaking generally, there is no manner of doubt that he will do all he can for me personally and for the furtherance of my interests. His intentions are always good and generous, but, but—— He brought me an invitation from Napoleon to an interview similar to that which took place to-day. Just think of my position. It is fixed for to-morrow and the terms of our armistice are not yet decided. Then, guess what we are going to do next. We are all three going to take up our residence in Tilsit so that the peace negotiations may be carried on there. I felt more dead than alive when I heard of this fiat. What a wretched, inconceivable idea!<sup>1</sup> Tilsit is to be considered neutral ground for the time being, and I understand that troops representing the three armies will occupy equal parts of the town.

“It is a great act of self-sacrifice on my part to write you such a long letter when I only came in from dinner at six o’clock. My head is going round

<sup>1</sup> Vilna was the place fixed upon by the Russian and Prussian plenipotentiaries as the scene of the peace negotiations. In this Russian town the Czar would naturally have assumed the position of host. Napoleon, however, desired to take the chief part himself.

and I am quite exhausted. Napoleon told Kalckreuth that he wished me to owe everything to himself alone, and that if I should desire to become a friend (that is to say a slave) of France, he would then be able to favour me again. He asked the Czar why he took so much interest in Prussia. What an extraordinary man!

"Imagine my perplexity with regard to Hardenberg especially at the present moment. Did any one ever hear of such a demand? A thousand thanks for your last two letters."

"My gloomy forebodings have not deceived me," wrote Queen Louisa in reply. "By this time one of the most terrible hours of your life has struck and you have seen the monster. My only consolation is that the Emperor of Russia was with you. Thus the affair would be less objectionable than if you had had to meet Napoleon alone. . . . Assuredly I realise how far-reaching is your friendship for me since it prompted you to send me so detailed a report at a moment when you might well feel giddy with the rush of events. I cannot tell you all my anxiety about yourself and the good cause and the issue of the present deliberations. There are things in your letter which are enough to drive one crazy. . . . Never will I comprehend this sojourn of crowned heads at Tilsit. Surely you were joking when you told me about it.

"One thing I beseech you to lay to heart. In settling this business you must summon up all the

energy you possess, and do not yield a hairsbreadth to any demand which is calculated to undermine your independence. Misfortune has surely taught us this great lesson—a lesson of which we were much in need—that the loss of territory is as nothing in comparison with the loss of liberty. Let Napoleon take half your kingdom if he will, but see to it that you are left in full and independent possession of the half that remains to you with power to do that which is right, to secure the happiness of those who are still subject to you, and to form such political alliances as honour and your own judgment dictate. Hardenberg must not be sacrificed—absolutely he must not—that is to say if you do not wish to take the first step that leads to slavery, and to draw down on yourself the scorn of the civilised world. There are two possible ways of retaining his services. Firstly, by means of the Emperor Alexander. His own convictions on the subject and his friendship for you will endue him with all the eloquence necessary to dissuade the enemy. Secondly, by means of yourself, my dear friend. You speak very well when you have prepared beforehand. In your place, I would tell Napoleon that he must recognise the impossibility of your acceding to his demand, since by so doing you would deprive yourself of your most capable minister. Say to him that it would be the same thing if you were to demand the dismissal of Talleyrand, who serves him well but of whom you have good

reason to complain and whom you cannot possibly trust. Thus he will see that two can play at the same game. I venture to beg you a second time to go vigorously into this business.

"Is no one thinking of a peace guaranteed by all the European Powers? Do you not see that it is the only thing that can save us. Only by the union of Northern Europe will it be possible for any of the countries concerned to escape (1) slavery, (2) being invaded and afterwards devoured by the hydra one after another. You have often spoken of a union of Northern Germany; it should now, as I say, be extended to a union of Northern Europe. *All for one and one for all.* I am very suspicious of this sojourn at Tilsit. You and the Czar are the soul of honour, but you are no match for the wiliness of that subtle, diabolical Doctor Faust and his familiar spirit.<sup>1</sup> So much the worse for you, and yet the Lord be thanked.

"We are all well here. Zastrow is still in the roadstead. On the day of the hurricane the dear frigate *Adrastea* was kind enough to save him when he was on the point of being shipwrecked. For my part I would willingly have spared him to the fishes.

"Indeed, my dear friend, the more I read and re-read your letter, the more distracted do I feel. Only be firm. Do not give up Hardenberg. For

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon and Talleyrand.

if Haugwitz and Zastrow come back, you will be done for, you will be a dishonoured slave of France.

"Bennigsen's armistice, from the benefits of which we are excluded, is an astonishing thing. But it is part and parcel of his system. He hates Prussia and would destroy it utterly if that were in his power. . . . *He* to speak of war, of formidable resistance, when the army has gone to the dogs by reason of his ill-will, his folly, his inopportune movements, his dislike of our people. I could flog him myself and spit in the face of his friend and protector<sup>1</sup> who is playing such a sinister part in all this business. I wager you that in six months our great defender Bennigsen will be in Paris, hand in glove with the enemy of all good. They have much in common. Give my sincere homage to the Czar. Tell him how much I am counting on his good intentions and on his strength of will."

Unfortunately for Queen Louisa and her cause, Alexander's excellent intentions were not backed up by a strong will. On his first visit to the pavilion on the raft, he found his adversary in an unexpectedly complacent frame of mind ; ready not only to conclude peace with him, but with a proposal that they should enter into an alliance and settle the affairs of Europe to their mutual satisfaction. Powerless to resist the wizardry of Napoleon, Alexander agreed to consider the new scheme in detail. He was specially

<sup>1</sup> The Grand Duke Constantine.

fascinated by the suggestion that if he would signify his adhesion to the anti-British policy of Napoleon, he would be enabled to achieve his own ambition of a conquest of Turkey, with the right to annex the lion's share of the spoil.

Less fortunate was the experience of the King of Prussia when he in turn came to visit the raft. The very approach to it was ominous. He now saw that two pavilions had been erected. Over the doors were the initials A and N surrounded by garlands of flowers. There was no place for the initials of the King through whose territory the river flowed. Without reference to him his town of Tilsit had been declared neutral. Without reference to him it was evident that the preliminaries of peace would be arranged. Embarrassed by the icy coldness of his reception and by the outburst of vindictiveness which followed the mention of Hardenberg's name, Frederick William did not appear at his best. He was bitterly disappointed by Napoleon's evasion of a personal discussion of the terms on which he was prepared to grant a truce, and shocked by his opponent's assertion in presence of the Czar that he had never meant to go to war with Prussia, for he was reserving her as an ally against the time when he would be involved in a conflict with Russia. It might have been well if Frederick William could have employed in this interview with Napoleon the forceful language in which he afterwards described the scene to his wife. Want of consideration for the defeated

monarch was as apparent in trifling matters as in serious ones. "Only fancy," he exclaims, "the beast had not the courtesy to present to me the members of his infernal suite, so of course I took no notice of them. . . . Before we re-embarked to return to our side of the river, Napoleon invited the Czar to dine with him towards six o'clock. He did not do me the honour to include me in the invitation. For this I am much obliged to him. When he stepped on shore to mount his horse the mob of Frenchmen on the bank shouted 'Vive l'Empereur,' just as they did yesterday. Thereupon the Russians shouted hurrah, and the Czar and I returned in our carriage. We dined together, but immediately afterward he set out for Tilsit to swallow the other famous dinner. He can no longer keep away from the man with whom, very very unfortunately for us, we have to do. . . . The Czar has already transferred his residence to Tilsit. The first battalion of his guards has crossed the river to form part of the Russian garrison. I cannot go into the town until the armistice is settled. But even then I do not propose to have more than a *pied-à-terre* in Tilsit. I will stay here in the country and avoid contact with the rabble as far as possible."

On 28th June the King is able to inform his consort that the armistice is signed and that he can now go through the form of establishing himself in Tilsit. With characteristic shrewdness the Queen warns him not to let his preference for the quiet village separate

him from the Czar or give the enemy any undue advantage. "As for Napoleon's intentions," she says, "I hardly know what to think of them. But it seems to me that he will either reinstate you in your possessions and make you his vassal, like the charming kings who come out of his factory, or else he will drive you out of the country and make a present of it to that delightful Murat<sup>1</sup> or to Jerome Bonaparte."

The latter surmise was correct. But when Napoleon hinted at the advisability of dispossessing Frederick William altogether, Alexander refused point blank to entertain the idea. It had therefore to be set aside. The alternative decision was precisely what Queen Louisa dreaded most of all. The King's wings were to be so effectually clipped that he would become a merely nominal sovereign with little prospect of ever regaining his liberty.

The courtesy shown to him on board the raft was but the precursor of other indignities. Napoleon had on his arrival in Tilsit appropriated the most commodious residence in the place. He now assumed the part of dispenser of hospitality. "I am invited to dine with my little friend," writes Frederick William on the day when the signature of the truce released him from his nondescript position. "Just fancy how delighted I am! . . . I will be thankful when I can return to my modest village school-house. It is a wretched place to live in, but I prefer it to a

<sup>1</sup> Murat was Napoleon's brother-in-law and the future King of Naples.

palace where I might have to meet the scourge of humanity. . . . The day before yesterday it was my fate to have to appear before him wearing the insignia of his infernal legion." A later communication informs the Queen that her husband had not yet assented to the dismissal of Hardenberg, but "he himself declares if I interpose further objections, any effort he may yet make to be of service will be not only useless but prejudicial to the State".

The first evening in Tilsit passed off better than the King anticipated ; but generally speaking, he met with little consideration either in the council chamber or at social functions. The present-day reader of his correspondence notes with amusement his comments on Napoleon's habit of dining at the unholy hour of eight or even nine o'clock at night! "I take my dinner at half-past twelve," says the conservative monarch. "My supper is this so-called dinner in Tilsit. . . . If any one had told me beforehand that in the month of June I would sit down to dinner by candle-light, I would never have believed it."

Napoleon's idea of being social was to assume the *rôle* of Socrates. "I wondered," writes Frederick William, "how the Czar could stand being made to answer questions as if he were a schoolboy. Yesterday he was catechised about the financial condition of Russia, the duties on sugar, the exports of furs, etc. The day before yesterday he had to reply to queries about the state of religion in Russia,

with minute details concerning the doctrines of the Greek Church." These *viva voce* examinations were evidently a mark of favour. Few questions were addressed to the King, and his pathetic endeavours to conciliate the autocrat of the dinner table were either ignored or responded to by some biting remark which made Frederick William fain to take refuge in silence.

While comporting himself with dignity in the trying position of being left alone to bear the brunt of Napoleon's animosity, the King's letters to his wife continued to give expression to his indignation and despair. His hope of lenient treatment, as a result of Alexander's mediation, had been gradually becoming fainter since the day when his ally returned from the raft with enthusiasm diverted from the cause of Europe by visions of gratified ambition conjured up by the French Emperor. As the negotiations proceeded, a more optimistic potentate than the King of Prussia might well have been staggered by the fate to which he and his country were condemned. On the east and west alike Prussia was to be deprived of her most valued possessions. On the east the Polish provinces were to be transformed into the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, under the suzerainty of the King of Saxony, while a kingdom of Westphalia for Napoleon's brother Jerome was to absorb the Prussian dominions on the left bank of the Elbe. Hanover was to be retained by the French. Napoleon's determination that his decrees for the

exclusion of British merchandise from the Continent should be made applicable to Prussia appears in his absolute refusal to reconsider his demand for the dismissal of "that Englishman," as he called Hardenberg.

In justice to Alexander it must be observed that he endeavoured to secure some modification of the sentence passed on Prussia. He was dismayed when Napoleon insisted that he should take possession of a strip of territory belonging to the land he had once sworn to defend. But, as Frederick William generously admitted, the Czar seemed to have got into the toils of Napoleon and could no longer help himself. Still, his representations certainly spared his friends what to them would have been the most crushing blow of all—the loss of Silesia. His success in this instance suggested to Alexander's sanguine mind that further concessions might be obtained if Frederick William could contrive to conceal his loathing for the way in which the negotiations were being conducted and set himself to humour the master of Northern Germany.

He spoke to the King, who strove to act up to the good advice bestowed upon him. But he had no spoon long enough to sup with his enemy. The crippling of Prussia had become part of the fixed policy of the French Emperor. Far from granting material concessions, he was hatching a scheme for rendering the subjugation of the country still more complete. But a final attempt to move him was yet

to be made. It was at this juncture that, according to certain authorities, Alexander bethought himself of Queen Louisa, and fell to wondering if, in view of the issues at stake, she could be prevailed upon to bring her powers of fascination and persuasion to bear upon Napoleon.

If this were so, he took no direct means of discovering whether or not she were likely to entertain the idea, though he may conceivably have dropped a hint to Hardenberg or to Kalckreuth. Since the former found it needful to efface himself as much as possible, Kalckreuth had become the most prominent representative of Prussia. But he was no match for the wily Talleyrand, and when he was assured by Murat that the presence of the Queen of Prussia would be welcome to Napoleon, he caught eagerly at the suggestion of a new way out of his perplexities, and urged the King to send for his wife.

The scheme did not at once find favour with Frederick William. He enclosed a note from Kalckreuth in his next letter to Queen Louisa, but stated that he did not see how she could come to Tilsit without being expressly invited thither. On 1st July she writes to assure her husband that she is ready to fly to Tilsit if it would serve any good purpose, yet there was so little likelihood of an invitation from one of the Emperors that she did not take the proposal very seriously. However, lest it should be renewed, she desires that Hardenberg should draw up a statement of the subjects which she

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would be expected to discuss with Napoleon. Experience had taught her the need of being prepared for emergencies. And, as she sarcastically remarks, it would not do for her to be at a loss in the presence of this "friend of mankind".

The more Louisa considered the possibility of a journey to Tilsit, the less she liked it. She had hardly been able to contemplate the idea of her husband being brought into what she regarded as degrading contact with Napoleon. Her whole nature revolted from any approach to him on her own part. Her heart, she says, beat wildly whenever a letter from Picktupöhnen was put into her hands. Her spirits rose when she received a communication containing no reference to the project. She expresses the hope that it has been abandoned, but asks her husband if it would be absolutely necessary for her to accept an invitation supposing one should yet be forthcoming? Could she not have an opportune illness, close the shutters and go to bed for a week? That would be a blissful alternative to an interview with the enemy.

Even as the Queen was writing the dreaded summons was on its way to her. In Tilsit things were going from bad to worse, and the King expressed his relief that Louisa had declared herself ready to sacrifice personal inclinations for the welfare of the State. He goes on to say: "Everybody here is perfectly certain that your coming will be attended by the happiest results. Hardenberg also takes this view and begs me to request you to hasten your arrival,

That which can yet be done must be done quickly. I beseech you, therefore, to set out as soon as possible for Picktupöhnen. You will find tolerable accommodation at the parsonage. That is where the Emperor of Russia stayed before he went to Tilsit. Everything else must be arranged when you come. Arm yourself with courage and think no more of possibilities which will never be realised. Think only of the dire necessity of Prussia now that Russia has taken her stand on the side of Napoleon."

Louisa, it is said, was conversing with some of the relatives and friends assembled at Memel when this letter from her husband was handed to her. Hufeland, her devoted medical attendant, noted the pained expression of her face as she mastered its contents; and for many a long day he was haunted by the agonised tone of her voice as she exclaimed, "This at least I did not expect". If it had been difficult to think of going to Tilsit by express invitation, how infinitely worse was this demand that she should proceed thither with no assurance that her presence was desired. Moreover, she instinctively divined that what Napoleon had refused to the Czar he was not likely to grant to a suppliant who came empty-handed. Yet, in response to some injunction about considering her own feelings in the matter, she said, "If any mortal believed that by taking this step I could save one solitary village for the Fatherland, that alone would determine me to go".

She left Memel early in the morning of 4th July,

accompanied by Countess Voss and Countess Tautenzien. Towards sunset she drove into Picktupöhnen. Her husband had not returned from Tilsit. Pending his arrival she had a lengthy conversation with Hardenberg, and learned the precise stage that had been reached in the negotiations.

The following morning brought the Czar from Tilsit to confer with the Queen and Hardenberg. By midday Louisa had grasped the salient points of the situation and knew what was expected of her.

To Napoleon the publication of the nefarious bulletins had been merely a means to an end. He had reason to think that they had assisted him to accomplish his end. Far from arousing in him any feeling of compunction, the episode only gave a certain piquancy to the idea of coming into personal contact with the woman whom he had chosen to make the scapegoat of her husband and his worthless ministers.

When he heard that she was in the neighbourhood, the Emperor directed his Master of the Horse to convey to her a message of polite inquiry. He also expressed his intention of waiting upon her as soon as she arrived at headquarters.

It was not considered necessary for her to set out at once, so she remained in Picktupöhnen till the afternoon of the following day. Meanwhile, everyone seems to have done his best to unnerve her for the coming interview. On the one hand she was told that she was the last hope of the nation, on the other





QUEEN LOUISA  
FROM A BUST BY CHRISTIAN RAUCH

that it was a sad thing to see her there. She had reason to know that good advice is cheap. It was so plentifully bestowed upon her that her patience gave way, and she exclaimed, "I wish you would all be quiet, and leave me to rest and collect my thoughts". She felt keenly the mockery of giving audience to Russian generals who would not raise a finger to help her. As for Bennigsen, she says, "I could not speak seriously to him, so I complimented him on his rosy cheeks and plump figure".

It was five o'clock on 6th July, 1807, when Louisa was ferried over the river and proceeded to make her entry into Tilsit. Many assembled to watch the progress of the state carriage drawn by eight horses, and those who had been instrumental in bringing the Queen from Memel felt more confident than ever as to the result of her intervention. Once again people were exclaiming that she had never looked more beautiful. She was in her thirty-second year, but her recent illness had left her with something of the slenderness of girlhood. Repressed excitement had brought back the colour to her cheeks and the brightness to her eyes. The silver embroidery of her white robe shimmered in the sunshine till she seemed to be clothed with light. To the on-lookers it was inconceivable that any request of hers could meet with refusal.

She had little more than time to arrive at her journey's end when Napoleon appeared at the head of his cavalcade of marshals. He was received by

the King and his suite at the entrance to the miller's dwelling which did duty for a royal residence. Her Majesty, it was said, awaited her visitor in the upper part of the house. He turned to the narrow stairway. A moment later Queen Louisa and her traducer were face to face.

Frederick William's letters had described Napoleon as unprepossessing and even commonplace in appearance. His more observant wife instantly noted that her enemy had a well-formed head and features which reminded her of portraits of the old Cæsars. At once she felt less constrained in his presence. The Emperor, on his side, was unmistakably impressed by the majestic loveliness of the woman who confronted him. Assuredly she had nothing in common with the repellent being who had masqueraded under her name in Napoleonic fiction. And once again she was not found wanting at the critical moment. In her concern for the fulfilment of her mission all other considerations were forgotten. She contributed her share to the preliminary remarks and compliments, and then deftly turned the conversation to the subject of the proposed peace.

Pictorial representations of this famous meeting usually show the figure of Talleyrand hovering in the background. In point of fact there was no witness of the scene. But, before leaving Tilsit, Louisa described it so vividly to the Swedish ambassador Brinckmann, that he immediately made notes of the

reported conversation, so as to convey the general impression of it to his sovereign. Though proved to be substantially correct, it is evident that Brinckmann's report gives a mere outline of an interview which lasted nearly an hour.

*Louisa*.—“I am making your Majesty's acquaintance at what is, for me at least, a very painful moment. I should perhaps hesitate to speak to you about the interests of my country. In days gone by you accused me of overmuch meddling in politics, though I do not honestly think that I deserved that reproach.”

*Napoleon*.—“Your Majesty may rest assured that I never believed all the rumours which were so indiscreetly circulated during the time of our political hostility.”

*Louisa*.—“Be that as it may, I would never forgive myself if I did not utilise this opportunity of speaking freely to you not as a politician but as a wife and mother. I flatter myself that all who really know me would do me the justice to admit that, in these capacities, I have always striven to do my duty.”

*Napoleon*.—“There is no one, your Majesty, who does not admit that.”

*Louisa*.—“Well, should I be truly loyal to the King if I did not share his present grief and cruel anxiety? We have been engaged in an unsuccessful war. You are the victor. But need I assume that you have any intention of misusing your victory?”

*Napoleon*.—“Will your Majesty allow me to reply

without shirking facts? Why did you force me to drive things to extremities? Did I not frequently make you offers of peace? When Austria found herself in a position similar to your position after the Battle of Jena, she did not dream of refusing reasonable terms although her two kingdoms were still intact. But you have repulsed every friendly overture. As for the proposals which I commissioned Bertrand to make to you after the Battle of Eylau, you would not even listen to them."

*Louisa.*—"As far as the negotiations after the Battle of Jena were concerned, it was certainly not the King who broke them off. And in recent days, you know better than I do, we were no longer free to make peace on our own account. But I will not venture to express my opinion on matters of grave political import. I would speak to you of my concern for the fate of my family, of my children. The history of our own times furnishes me with terrifying illustrations of what may happen to representatives of a line of kings. I could not endure the thought of having given birth to beings before whom there is nothing but misery. You belong to a numerous family. And you have taken every opportunity of showing that their welfare is dear to your heart. Is it possible that the anxiety of a mother does not appear to you something right and worthy of esteem?"

*Napoleon.*—"But your Majesty must not imagine that there is any question of doing away with the kingdom of Prussia."

*Louisa.*—"No, but the acceptance of such a peace as has been proposed to us is merely preparing it for future destruction. The interests of another Power may perhaps conflict with our wishes, but if this peace depends on you alone——"

*Napoleon.*—"Oh, you may be quite convinced that I alone decide everything."

*Louisa.*—"I know you only by your reputation, but I will not wrong you by believing that you are indifferent to the satisfaction of helping people who may be pitied but not despised. Is it a worthy thing to take vengeance on those who can do nothing to protect themselves? A woman may say this to you though probably a man would not. Establish for yourself a claim on our gratitude, and your victories will bring you double honour."

*Napoleon.*—"But have you not already rejected my offer of friendship with Prussia?"

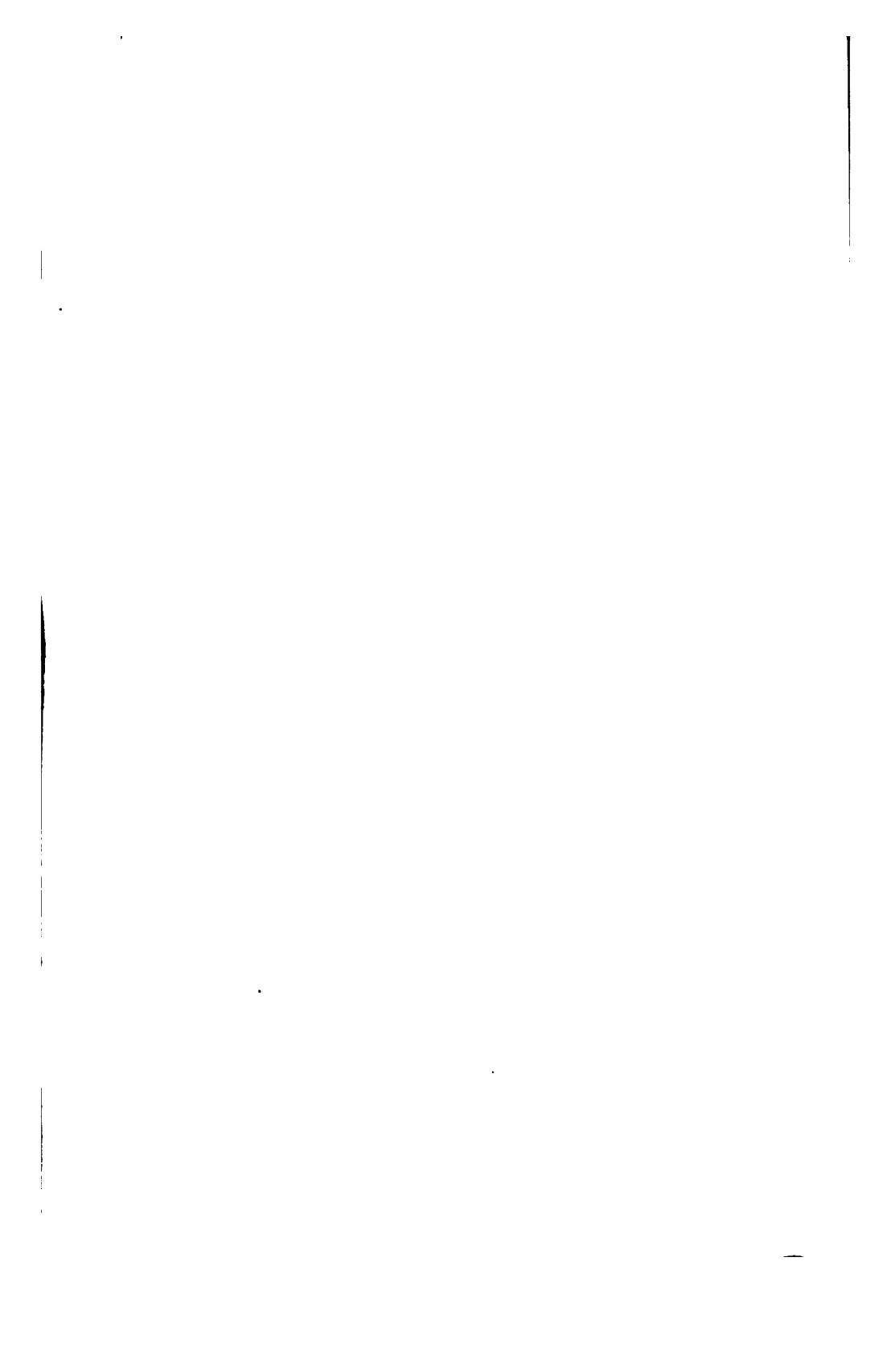
*Louisa.*—"I certainly could not believe in it at the time when you forced us to accept Hanover, and then negotiated with England about giving it back. In those days I may have advocated a course opposed to your interests, but it was because I believed myself to be speaking in the interests of the King."

*Napoleon.*—"Yes, at that time I know you shared the mistaken view of your cabinet council, but I never had any intention of restoring Hanover to the English."

*Louisa.*—"At present, however, we are not concerned about Hanover but about procuring such

conditions that the peace of which we are so sorely in need may not prove altogether intolerable."

It was perhaps when Napoleon failed to turn the conversation into a discussion of the Hanoverian question that he attempted to direct it into quite another channel by asking flippant questions about the material of which the Queen's draperies were composed, where it was manufactured, and so forth. "Shall we talk of chiffons at a moment like this?" exclaimed his companion, and overawed by her reproachful look he listened quietly while in response to his invitation to her to state her wishes with regard to the peace she proceeded to plead for the retention of the more ancient possessions of Prussia west of the Elbe, including the fortress of Magdeburg and the surrounding territory. Napoleon's silence seemed to her almost as discouraging as his interruptions. "You are not answering my questions," she said, "and yet it would cost you but a word to make the terms of peace acceptable." "I will think over what you have said. We will see about it," said Napoleon. But his manner had become more friendly and the Queen did not despair of some more definite response. Whether or not she would have gained her end if her unlucky husband had not entered the room while she was still pleading for him and for her country will never be known. To the Emperor of Russia Napoleon afterwards remarked that the King had arrived in the very nick of time from the point of view of the interests of





THE KING AND QUEEN OF PRUSSIA WITH NAPOLEON AND  
THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA AT TILSIT  
AFTER A PAINTING BY GOSSE AT VERSAILLES

France. "If he had left me with the Queen for another quarter of an hour, I would have promised her anything she asked," said he. That, however, was in all probability a Napoleonic method of disclaiming any obligation to serve Her Majesty. With the appearance of the King the interview came to an end, but when Napoleon left her Louisa was by no means unhappy about the ultimate result of her intervention. She was gratified at having met with no rebuff, and an opportunity of reverting to the subject might be anticipated later on, for the Emperor had invited both King and Queen to be his guests for the evening.

So far there had been no convivial element in the meeting of crowned heads round the conqueror's table. What with the vitriolic humour of the host and his oftentimes embarrassing questions, together with the inscrutable silences of Frederick William, Alexander's position had been the reverse of enviable. He was very willing to yield to Queen Louisa his seat of honour at Napoleon's right hand. On this particular evening her vivacity and ready wit prevented awkward pauses and took the edge off inopportune remarks.

Her reward was another chance of pleading her cause with the all-powerful French Emperor. It may have been on this occasion that he expressed astonishment that the Prussians should have taken the risk of going to war with him. Thereupon Queen Louisa replied, "The glorious memory of

Frederick the Great might well justify any mistake as to our resources". Napoleon did not appear insensible either to his companion's arguments or to her evident emotion. But he persistently avoided giving her the definite promises she sought; she could only therefore rejoice with trembling when, at the close of that eventful day, the friends of Prussia began to felicitate her on the near prospect of success. She was more grieved than surprised when they returned to her on the morrow with a different tale. Napoleon had brusquely announced to the Prussian diplomatists that his encouraging words to the Queen were mere "expressions of politeness that bound him to nothing". The treaty, he continued, was ready for signature. Not one of its terrible conditions would be erased.

Early that day the Queen returned to Tilsit. Twice during the afternoon did Napoleon ride past the miller's house without drawing rein. He was obviously determined to spare his fallen enemy no possible humiliation. When therefore he sent an invitation to Louisa to join the three monarchs at dinner, she would fain have refused. But she dared not risk offending the tyrant. Even when the Treaty of Tilsit should have transferred to him nearly half the kingdom and five million Prussian subjects, he was not prepared to cry quits with Frederick William. He had yet to specify the amount of the indemnity he proposed to wring from the mutilated remains of Prussia.

Napoleon, says Countess Voss, received her mistress with a countenance in which embarrassment and maliciousness were struggling for the mastery. Embarrassment apparently gained the upper hand ; for, in marked contrast to the previous evening, the meal was partaken of almost in silence. The feeling of oppression remained after the Emperor and his guests had risen from table. Queen Louisa made her way to an open window and stood there alone. Presently Napoleon approached her for what proved to be their last interchange of words. Her sorrowful look checked his hollow protestations of regret that he had been unable to comply with her wishes. Tradition tells that, to relieve the feeling of constraint he turned to a rose plant placed near the window and, breaking off a flower, offered it to his companion. She hesitated a moment, then seeing her way to a final effort on behalf of her country, she said beseechingly, "At least with Magdeburg". "Your Majesty has forgotten our relative positions," was the curt rejoinder. "What I offer is for you to receive without conditions." "Your rose is too thorny for me," said Louisa, ignoring the double meaning of his words.

As the Emperor conducted her to her carriage, she could not forbear commenting on the needless cruelty wherewith he had raised her hopes merely to disappoint them. This time his only reply was what she afterwards described as "a satanic smile".

There was nothing left to be done, nothing to

detain the Queen amidst surroundings that had become unendurable. Through the long twilight of the northern midsummer she made her way back to her village lodging. Two days later the extortionate treaty was signed. Napoleon set out for Königsberg on his way to Paris. Alexander began his return journey to St. Petersburg. His defection had sorely grieved the Prussian King and Queen; and although it made no outward breach in the friendly relations of the past five years, they could hardly have felt so regretful as heretofore when he came to take leave of them. Their own sorrowful way led back to Memel.

This journey to Tilsit with its attendant circumstances was at once the most picturesque and the most painful episode in Queen Louisa's career. In reference to it she sometimes recalled the saying of Mary Tudor with regard to Calais, and declared that Magdeburg would be found written upon her heart when she was dead.

More full of briers than ever was the workaday world to which she returned. And the haunting sense of humiliation and failure tended, for a time, to make the constant struggle more difficult. Yet never was failure more emphatically "a triumph's evidence for the fulness of the days". At Tilsit she laid the foundation-stone alike of her own fame and of the modern German Empire. The events of 1807 and those of 1870 are intimately related. No wonder the patriotic German takes pleasure in placing the

two dates side by side and expatiating on the significance of the change in the order of the numerals. And the theme may be illustrated by a couple of prints—the one a picture of Louisa vainly interceding with Napoleon I.; the other a representation of Louisa's son receiving the sword of Napoleon III. after Sedan.

Apostles of the patriotic league, formed shortly after the conclusion of the Tilsit treaty, soon discovered that they had a name to conjure with. Like Frederick the Great's victory at Rossbach, Louisa's spirited appeal on behalf of her country roused the enthusiasm of Germans of every description. In Prussia especially it gave rise to a good deal of heart-searching, and quickened the determination of the people not to be found wanting when the time came to renew the struggle for independence.

Writers of Louisa's own day frequently refer to the impression made upon the nation when adversity had brought out all the strength and nobility of her character. And this is well; for the earlier biographers of the wife of Frederick William III. are so concerned lest any reader should mistake her for a politician of the type of Maria Theresa or Elizabeth of England, that they fail to give due prominence to her mental endowments and power of evoking the spirit of nationality. But for contemporary testimony and the published fragments of her correspondence, she might have come to be regarded as a somewhat insipid paragon of all the domestic virtues. Recent

years have fortunately witnessed the publication of valuable collections of her letters. It is no stickler for propriety, but a living, loving human being who stands revealed in them. Never surely was there such a swift disburdening of the mind as when Louisa knows that she can send to her correspondent "by a sure hand". Proverbs, colloquialisms, scraps of dialect are pressed into the service. The mood of the moment is accurately reflected. At one time she is on the heights, at another in the depths. By turns she shows herself gentle and passionate, humble and proud, filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice and ready to call down fire and brimstone on her enemies. Most truly does she say of her letters that in them may be discovered her "very heart and soul". They also testify to her intellectual powers, making it manifest that she was very shrewd in her estimate of men, capable of discerning the signs of the times and, not infrequently, of forestalling the verdict of history by her judgment of current events. It is impossible to read her correspondence with the King during the proceedings at Tilsit without wondering what might have been the issue of the negotiations had Louisa been Queen in her own right. These epistles also illustrate an aspect of her affection for her husband to which reference has already been made. With but little alteration they might be read as the letters of a mother to her son.

Queen Louisa's biographers were willing to admit that her speech was "alway with grace"; but, lest

the salt wherewith it was seasoned should offend the palate of a less robust age, many of them followed up the conventional portrayal of her character by the bowdlerising of her correspondence.<sup>1</sup> Present-day editors deal more fairly with the fascinating Queen, and print her letters word for word. Thus she can still, as it were, speak for herself and become her own best biographer during the later years of her life. It would have been strange indeed if she who suffered so much at the hands of Napoleon should not have shared the popular belief quaintly implied in the admonition of a German mystic that "Christians must strive to subdue the Bonaparte within"!

The Bonaparte without was far from having made his last disparaging remark about Queen Louisa when he parted from her at Tilsit. That, however, was not because he had found her weak, but because he was more firmly convinced than ever that she was a force to be reckoned with. He never again made her the subject of a deliberate personal attack, and when there was no longer any political motive for decrying her, he was not unappreciative. At St. Helena he once said : "I had a great opinion of the Queen of Prussia. She was graceful, witty and prodigiously insinuating. If the King had brought her to Tilsit at the outset, he would have obtained more favourable terms." Again, in reference to their first interview, he observed : "In spite of my

<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Georg Horn, *Das Buch von der Königin Luise*, p.

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adroitness and my efforts to avoid certain topics, the Queen remained mistress of the situation. She took the lead in our conversation and checked every attempt to divert it from the subjects she wished me to consider. Perhaps she was a trifle too persistent. But we must remember that the end she sought to gain was, to her, of vital importance and that the time at her disposal was short and precious."

In its indirect results, therefore, Queen Louisa's most notable appearance in the political arena was far from being a failure. That she did not carry her point is not altogether a subject for regret. Had she done so, it would have involved the acceptance of conditions tending to fetter the King's hands in 1813. But students of the great historical drama of the early nineteenth century will always turn with interest to the scenes descriptive of "the days of Tilsit" and of those few brief interviews between the man and the woman on whom pre-eminently the ends of the ages had come.

## CHAPTER XIII

### QUEEN LOUISA IN MEMEL. THE CONVENTION OF KÖNIGSBERG. THE LEGISLATIVE REFORMS OF STEIN

**E**XHAUSTED in mind and body Queen Louisa returned to the little seaport town of which she had long been weary. Bitterly did she resent the cruelty of Napoleon in depriving her of her two chief grounds for hope—the support of Russia and the statesmanlike ability of Hardenberg. The weeks which followed were the darkest of her whole existence. That Alexander should have failed to keep faith with the friends who had trusted him to their own undoing, shocked and grieved her beyond measure. For the time being she lost confidence in God, in man and in herself.

Some idea of what she went through during this period of doubt, despair and physical suffering may be gleaned from the diary of Countess Voss. The Prussian losses were a sore grief to that staunch friend of the royal family. "I have no words," she writes, "to express the sorrow and vexation which fill my heart. . . . Every day I find new cause for admiration in the King's composure. The

poor Queen, on the contrary, is quite bowed down with grief."—"Ah, the poor Queen, she suffers more than any of us."—"The poor Queen weeps too much."—"Merciful God, how greatly she is to be pitied!"

It is, however, in letters from Louisa to her beloved brother George that we find the most accurate reflection of her state of mind after the conclusion of the Peace of Tilsit. On 5th August, 1807, she writes: "Rich in experience, poor in faith, I lay my weary head upon your breast. Oh, George, what a fate, what a future, what a past! Is it possible that God created men such as I have come to know? Good people do evil, but devils hatch out the evil and bring good people under its influence. This is what I have been seeing with my own eyes. Filled only with the thought of my sacred duty, I hastened to Tilsit and spoke as God gave me utterance. Yet I did not speak to a man but to a—to a being with no human heart in his breast. The outcome therefore was such utter inhumanity that Prussia must surely stand justified to the world.

"If I could only see you, I would tell you all. At first you would scarcely be able to credit it. You would listen without taking it in. Yes, dear George, I have had some fearful experiences. But, dear love, they have had no deteriorating effect on me. Let this be your comfort."

Four days later, 9th August, 1807, Louisa begins another letter to the same sympathetic correspondent.

The falling away of the Emperor Alexander is still uppermost in her thoughts. "Nothing in this world," she says, "so overwhelms me with sorrow as the lapses of good men and my having to renounce all the hopes based on their integrity. But I may add that it is likewise overwhelming when evil—active, potent evil—is seen close at hand and felt to be a thousand times more appalling than the feeble imagination could picture it. A meeting of three crowned heads! Can one conceive of such an event taking place without manifestations of greatness and clemency, without some noble end in view? Instead of this I found at Tilsit a great idol (of unknown and unnamed metal) set up for men to worship. And this idol was treading the other two crowned heads underfoot. Apart from the testimony of an eye-witness, nobody could have the least notion of the things which came to pass—things revealing the depravity, callousness and unscrupulousness of one contracting party and the weakness of another, who might have taken the upper hand had he chosen to assert himself. As one reason for my own want of success, be it said, that it is vastly easier to speak for oneself than to represent two people. For myself I got along fairly well, but there was always the King's point of view to be considered. What that poor man suffered baffles description. From pure love of country and in order to save his most ancient provinces from the claws of the devil, he had, as it were, to let himself be stretched on the rack for fourteen long

days. All the while the most outrageous suggestions were being made to him. Every day brought worse insults. More and more of our possessions were taken from us, and the way in which our losses were announced was degrading and humiliating in the extreme. . . . This letter will hardly contain anything new to you, but it is having a soothing effect on myself, inasmuch as it enables me to gain a clearer view of my own conduct and of the reasons for my being so downcast. I cannot yet rise above my miseries. Weakness, apathy, want of self-confidence, evil habits, etc., are still too prevalent amongst us. Mistakes are made which exasperate me more than I can tell. I could jump out of my skin when I have to look on without being free to help. In confidence I say to you that things are being gone about in such a way that the future can bring no amelioration of our lot.

"I howl day and night for the loss of Hardenberg. Of late the King had come to place entire confidence in him, and Hardenberg was utterly devoted to the King. . . . Really there was something godlike about the man. Never a thought of himself, only of the country—the means whereby it might yet be saved—how this might be attempted—how that might be avoided. Such was Hardenberg up to the time when we were forced to bid him an eternal farewell at Picktupöhnen. While still under the influence of this example of true manliness, I had to meet Napoleon who was depriving us of the treasure

we had in Hardenberg, in order that he might more easily fulfil his wicked purposes with us. For this he robbed us of all means of bringing order into the confusion which, with devilish ingenuity and satisfaction, he had brought about.

"Can you realise our position now? Can you imagine the thoughts which were seething in my brain when I was brought face to face with the most iniquitous man in the world and overlooked the abyss into which he was going to plunge us with a callousness which, the Lord be thanked, is peculiar to him alone?

"Adieu, dearest George; the first three pages of this letter you can read to papa, the rest to nobody at all.

"Have you read Staël's *Corinne*? If not, I beg you to do so."

It was indeed an evil day for Prussia when Napoleon's refusal to negotiate with Hardenberg at Tilsit paved the way for the appointment of Marshal Kalckreuth as the King's chief representative. With this blustering soldier Talleyrand and his master did as they listed. In the matter of the treaty they compelled him to yield to them on every point. And on 12th July, 1807, he completed the ruin of his country by giving his assent to the Convention of Königsberg. That is to say, he acceded to a proposal that the French troops should not be withdrawn from Prussia till the unspecified war contributions claimed by Napoleon had been fully paid up.

It is very certain that in signing this agreement Kalckreuth also signed the death warrant of Queen Louisa. It has been mistakenly asserted that she returned from Tilsit broken-hearted and unable for further sacrifice. She was yet to respond nobly to many demands on her capacity for self-sacrifice, and was ready to face Napoleon again if the country were likely to benefit by it. What must be borne in mind is that, from 1807 onwards, her life was one long exhausting struggle with difficulties directly attributable to the terms of the Convention. This experience indubitably tended to undermine her constitution and deprive her of her remarkable recuperative power.

Fortunately the full meaning of the nefarious compact did not at first transpire. Louisa's faith revived and her outlook became less gloomy as she realised in how many ways she could be of service to the distressed King and country. Frederick William's composure had given place to hopeless dejection. He had withdrawn his confidence from Köckeritz only, it appeared, to come under the more dangerous influence of Beyme, a member of the Privy Cabinet who showed signs of developing into another Haugwitz. In overcrowded Memel it was almost impossible to find opportunities for private conversation, so Louisa took to accompanying her husband on long solitary walks. He was much in need of her stimulating companionship. He had made up his mind that, sooner or later, he would be forced to abdicate. Consequently he believed that it mattered

little what he did, or with whom he took counsel. The reinstatement of Voss, a member of the former government, was doubtless one of the things which made Louisa feel as if she could "jump out of her skin". Voss was a relative of the Mistress of the Household, but the old lady was by no means blind to his defects. "He is not the man we want," she exclaims. "He has too little experience, too little knowledge of the world. I said so to the King, and he became angry and made bitter remarks about Hardenberg. But alas, if things go on like this, there will be an end of us altogether."

To avert this threatened catastrophe now became the primary object of Queen Louisa's life. A means of doing so had been indicated by Hardenberg, namely, the nomination of Baron Stein to the office of chief minister. But the very idea of such a step was repugnant to Frederick William, with his horror of the sweeping changes which he foresaw would follow Stein's accession to power. He hesitated and shrank back. But the entreaties of his wife and the representations of Princess Louisa Radziwill, General Blücher and other patriots were not without effect. When it became known that Napoleon, who knew Stein only as an expert financier, was also favourable to the proposed appointment, the King gave way and consented to dismiss Voss and write the letter of recall.

An anxious time followed. It was by no means certain that Stein would accept the position offered to

him. His services to the Hohenzollern kings, from Frederick the Great onwards, had ended in his ungracious dismissal by Frederick William III. To all who had the interests of the country at heart, it was an unspeakable relief when the statesman decided that, "In this hour of universal misfortune it would be very unjustifiable to take account of personal considerations".

To Frau von Berg, Stein's friend and her own, Queen Louisa wrote : "Stein is coming, and light has once more arisen in my darkness. . . . His large heart and comprehensive mind may discover some way of escape hidden from the rest of us." But she was not without misgivings as to the result of bringing together two such diametrically opposite characters as Frederick William and the new minister. To Stein Frau von Berg writes : "I beg you to become as intimate as possible with the Queen. When you understand her motives you will love her, and find yourself very much at one with her. She scorns all petty ways of increasing her power ; and, for this reason alone, is worthy of esteem. . . . The evils of the present day are so rampant that her eyes have been opened to many things. She is a mother, and the future of her children can never be indifferent to her. She cleaves to her country with the whole strength of her being. She has no desire to have anything to do with the details of government. . . . What she needs is support in her efforts to raise the moral tone of the people, to prevent the King from

being approached by individuals whose influence might be detrimental to the honour and well-being of His Majesty and the nation, to decide on the best means of educating her family, especially her eldest son ; in short, to further every scheme which has for its object the maintenance of the dignity of the royal house and the welfare of the State. Will you not give her this support?"

Stein had his first interview with the King at Memel on 1st October, 1807. He describes him as deeply depressed and thinking of abdication ; the Queen as gentle, melancholy, full of anxiety but also of hope. It was arranged that he should have the control of all civil affairs, that the King should adopt his plan of reconstruction, and, furthermore, that Beyme, whose views were certainly unlikely to coincide with Stein's, should not have access to the King.<sup>1</sup>

"We started," says Stein, "from the fundamental idea of rousing a moral, religious and patriotic spirit in the nation." Five days after his great powers had been conferred upon him, the edict for the emancipation of the serfs throughout the whole Prussian monarchy was signed at Memel (9th October, 1807). The same edict did away with ancient restrictions on the possession of land. It likewise instituted freedom of vocation, and tended to obliterate the hard and fast lines which had severed one class of the community from another. Noblemen with a

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*

leaning towards commercial pursuits ; citizens fitted for responsible posts in the army or civil service ; peasants who preferred trade to agriculture, were henceforth free to follow their bent. Legislation specially designed to benefit the dwellers in rural districts was succeeded by enactments for the better government of the towns, embodied in the edict of municipal reform. By these and other measures, "Stein transformed an almost mediæval social and political structure into a modern state in the space of thirteen months". It was a task only to be achieved by a man who will not swerve from his course for any amount of opposition. The work might indeed have been arrested by the King, and, as Frederick William frequently dissented from the conclusions of his prime minister, Louisa was kept in dread lest they should drift into renewed misunderstanding. Stein's masterful manner was a constant source of danger. "If only," exclaims the harassed Queen, "Stein were a little more careful of the way in which he addresses the King, if he could contrive not to appear so great a man as he is, everything would go well. His Majesty lays much stress on a gentle reverent manner. Hardenberg was inimitable in this respect, making proposals in such a way that the King always remained King. There is a great deal in that."

The King's continued association with Beyme also caused his wife many an anxious moment. For Stein was naturally indignant at His Majesty's breach

of promise. The following note written by Queen Louisa to Stein shows her trying to pour oil on troubled waters: "I beseech you to be patient during these first months. The King will assuredly keep his word. Beyme will take his departure, but not till we are back in Berlin. For heaven's sake do not let the good cause suffer for want of three months' patience. I conjure you for the sake of the King, of the Fatherland, of my children, for my own sake. Patience!"

This undated communication probably belongs to the close of the year 1807, before the Queen had accepted the fact that the treaty of peace had done nothing to expedite the return of the court to Berlin. Stein had arrived at Memel in the expectation of being able to rid the country of the French troops by mortgaging the royal domains and paying off a first instalment of the indemnity. Great was his consternation when the true inwardness of the Convention of Königsberg was revealed.

Napoleon's policy of "making war support war" was the basis of his popularity in France. By demanding an indemnity of a hundred and fifty million francs, a far larger sum than the Prussian government could raise, he gained a pretext for systematically appropriating the revenues of the kingdom in default of payment. But he was not satisfied even with this substantial contribution towards the keeping up of his Grand Army. The fatal Convention enabled him to evade the necessity of withdrawing

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the forty thousand French soldiers still occupying the towns and fortresses of Prussia. The responsibility of their maintenance was thus thrown upon the insolvent nation.

What it meant to Queen Louisa to have her reviving hopes so cruelly shattered may be gathered from one of her letters to Frau von Berg. It is curious to note that even at such a moment the temptation to pun upon Stein's name was irresistible.<sup>1</sup> "The last proposals, or rather laws laid down to us on the strength of the formal Convention, were of such a nature that, for the first time, Stein was completely petrified. The war contributions amount to a hundred and fifty million francs. A third of this sum is to be paid at once in ready money, half of the remainder in promissory notes, and the other half by the sale of domains. The French also demand five fortresses as a pledge that payment will be made at the appointed time. These are to be garrisoned by forty thousand French troops who must be fed, clothed, armed and paid by the King. . . . Since it is conceivable that, in the fortresses, there may not be room for forty thousand men, lands must be assigned to them, or rather they will help themselves to the lands they want. What now remains to the King? What position does he hold in the midst of his provinces?

<sup>1</sup> By the patriotic party Stein is often referred to as "the precious stone," "the corner stone of the state," "the stumbling stone of the enemy," etc.

"Since it is impossible to agree to these terms, an attempt will be made to obtain some modification of them by sending Prince William to Paris. His negotiations with Napoleon will be based on a document drawn up by Stein. God be thanked that Stein is here. It is a proof that He has not forsaken us utterly

"Now you know our horrible plight. I fear my strength to bear up will soon give way. It is terribly hard—especially as it is so undeserved. My future is most sad. If we could only keep Berlin, but many a time my heart is oppressed by the foreboding that it too will be torn away from us to form the capital of another kingdom. If so, I shall have only one wish—to wander away, far away, where we can live as private persons, and forget if possible. O God, to what has Prussia come? Abandoned through weakness, persecuted out of mere wantonness, weakened by misfortune, we must surely perish."

In this period of renewed disaster the presence of Stein was a chief source of hope and encouragement to Louisa. "If you have not too much to do," she writes to him, "if the bad news does not make it needful for you to hold conferences or decide matters of importance, I wish so much, so very much, to have the comfort of a short talk with you at five o'clock. It is an inestimable privilege to be able to share my grief with you, to listen to the opinions of a wise and sympathetic man. Where indeed are we now? To what are we reduced? Our death sentence has been pronounced!"

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"In the circumstances nothing was left for the Prussian Government but, on the one hand, to endeavour by every means to shake Napoleon's purpose and induce him to abate something of his cruelty, and, on the other, to strain the resources of the country to the utmost in order to satisfy his pecuniary demands."<sup>1</sup> In spite of Queen Louisa's lack of success at Tilsit, she offered to go to Paris and once more intercede with Napoleon. But Stein was able to persuade her that the time had not yet come for such a step. As already stated, the mission was entrusted to the King's brother, Prince William. Stein himself proceeded to Berlin to interview Daru, who was conducting negotiations on the French side, but he was unable to effect much.

Even before Prince William set out for France, efforts to obtain some mitigation of the judgment which had been passed on Prussia were made by the Queen's brother, Prince George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and by her sister Theresa, whom business of their own had brought to Paris. On 5th November, 1807, Queen Louisa addressed to them the following pathetic letter : "You are together, my dear ones, and that alone will afford you satisfaction. When I think of your happiness in seeing one another, of being able to speak freely one to another, I realise that there is still something in this world which can give me pleasure—and from pleasure I have long been estranged. Tears, the shadow of a great sorrow,

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Stein.*

even at times despair—these have been my daily portion. If Prince William fails in his undertaking, if Napoleon does not change his mind with regard to us, if he will not listen to the voice of humanity and justice, there is nothing more to be said. Prussia will cease to exist, and I know not what name the King will desire, or be permitted to take, to indicate what he is, or rather, what he no longer will be.

"I assure you, dear Theresa and George, that history tells of nothing which can be compared with our lot. Never have innocent people suffered more. One can hardly conceive of the condition of the country—exhausted, ruined. The King, the nobles, all are ruined. A war contribution of a hundred and eighty million francs is demanded after we have been deprived of all means of payment, of existence even. We are surrounded by mourning families. Like their King, they are without bread or prospect for the future. At our dinner four dishes only appear on the table, at supper three. I assure you, you have no idea of the state of things. Add to this my renewed hope of motherhood with the discomfort inseparable from such a condition; and the distress of soul which is eating me up. The climate too, I cannot endure, for it is simply unendurable—damp and cold. For nine weeks it has done nothing but rain, with intervals of a few hours' duration, when one runs the risk of sinking head over ears in mud, or of falling down in it and breaking one's arms and legs. Such are the pleasures of Memel! If one

could only say, ‘This will not last. There will be an end to all this misery.’ But there is no probability of relief. May God preserve men from a life like this. I fear I have said too much. I have brought tears to your eyes. At least they will fall for unfeigned suffering.

“The sending of Prince William to Paris is the outcome of desperation. But it was the only thing that was left to us to attempt. When all is over for us, we will have nothing with which to reproach ourselves. The future must be our judge. . . . The King has just come in and sends very kind greetings to you both. Only think that if it should be possible for him to return to Berlin in the end of January, I should not then be able to accompany him. I should have to remain in this northern swamp, where the trees are still bare in the month of June, where the fruit never ripens at all. What a climate! Farewell, my dear ones. May God bless you and grant you the happiness He has taken away from me. Pray for me. I need it sorely. *Das Herz ist gestorben.*”<sup>1</sup>

In his eagerness to be of service to his sister Louisa, Prince George of Mecklenburg ran the risk of offending Napoleon and endangering his own cause. “These are the words of a young man,” said the Emperor at the close of a lengthy interview. And, when the Prince declared that he could

<sup>1</sup> “My heart is dead.” See Theckla’s song in Schiller’s *Wallenstein*.

take nothing back, his companion added, "of a young man who is strongly attached to his family". Thus the matter ended. With Princess Theresa of Thurn and Taxis, Napoleon's arguments had more weight. Louisa was justly indignant when her sister insinuated that the Prussian Government was not doing everything possible for the liberation of the country. The mere fact that Stein was at the head of it ought, the Queen asserted, to be sufficient repudiation of such a charge. This incident is in her mind when, on 17th December, 1807, she writes to her brother George: "How happy your last letter made me! What pleasure I had in all its contents! Every sentence, every word, testifies to your love and devotion to the King and myself. Of this I was always assured. Yet it was comforting, unspeakably comforting, to have it so clearly expressed. I read your letter aloud to Princess William, and she said, 'What a beautiful letter! What honour it does to the heart of the writer!' You cannot conceive what an excellent woman she is, how deeply she feels, how warm is her sympathy. She is so clever, knows so much, and always occupies herself wisely and usefully. It is well for her that she has the power of doing this. But I do not waste my time either, and loneliness is conducive to rapid progress in study." Elsewhere Queen Louisa says: "I find time for a good deal of reading and thinking. In the midst of all the troubles I have my brighter days. My chief happiness, however, is wholly independent of

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other people. It proceeds from within. But gladness also comes to me from without, especially from the friendship of the King, from his confidence in me and his love towards me. This is a source of great happiness. It is the crowning of our fourteen years of married life."

To her brother Louisa expresses her keen regret on hearing that Napoleon had left Paris for Italy without receiving a letter in which she had represented to him how seriously her health was being affected by the climate of Memel and entreated him to make it possible for her to go back to Berlin. Stein was also anxious to get the royal family away from Memel where the very walls seemed to have ears and tongues. Napoleon refused to listen to any suggestion about Berlin, but he was willing to withdraw his soldiers from the immediate neighbourhood of Königsberg. Under pretext of settling a dispute between the King of Spain and the heir to the throne, the French Emperor had already despatched an army to the Peninsula. But he had designs of his own with regard to the Spanish crown, and foresaw the need of additional troops if they were to take shape. His invasion of Spain was destined to have considerable influence on the future of Prussia. In the first instance, it opened up a way for the return of the King to his more ancient capital.

The prospect afforded no great pleasure to the home-sick Queen. To her brother she writes :

"Brought up in the south of Germany, I had trouble enough in getting accustomed to the climate of Berlin. But what was that in comparison with the climate of East Prussia? When one is deprived of all the comforts of life, one never feels it so much as in a time of great sorrow or physical prostration. I am going to Königsberg, and my confinement will take place in that horrible castle. But at least the rooms are large and lofty. Draughts do not kill you in bed, as they do in Memel where the houses seem to be made of cardboard and the windows are a mere farce. My convalescence last year was prolonged for ten weeks. Four months after my illness I was still so weak that the least thing upset me. I am utterly disheartened when I think of all this, and not only on my own account. What the country is suffering is beyond all power of description. We have simply nothing left and are living on air. The King has to make the strictest restrictions—*les plus strictes restrictions*—both at table and in the various branches of the Government. Famine and hunger are everywhere."

On 14th January, 1808, Frederick William issued the following proclamation to the citizens of Memel : "It will never be forgotten, that of all the towns in my kingdom Memel alone has been spared the immediate horrors of war. I shall ever recall with gratitude that Divine Providence permitted my family to find a refuge here. From the inhabitants of the town and the surrounding region we have received

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many touching manifestations of affection and unswerving fidelity even under the apprehension of imminent danger from the enemy. To remember these things will be a peculiar pleasure. The town may be assured of my goodwill. I will gladly seize every opportunity to give practical evidence of my appreciation."

It was a trying experience for the King and Queen to journey westward through the desolate country. The hospitable villages of former days had become mere heaps of blackened ruins. Every house had been burnt down by the enemy.

## CHAPTER XIV

### QUEEN LOUISA IN KÖNIGSBERG

ON 16th January, 1808, Frederick William and Louisa re-entered Königsberg. It was dark and they drove straight to the castle. "In the evening," says Countess Voss, "we had some cold meat and a bowl of punch by way of celebration." The next day was given up to public rejoicings over the return of the King and Queen. A deputation proceeded to the castle to express the lively satisfaction of the citizens and to present the Queen with the welcome gift of a comfortable reclining chair. At night the city was illuminated.

The departure from Memel marks the turning point in the fortunes of the Prussian royal family. At intervals it seemed not improbable that they might have to retrace their steps, or even quit the country altogether. But it so fell out that Königsberg remained their headquarters until they returned to Berlin.

To the King and Queen the change of residence brought but little relief from the hardships and vexations of their life at Memel. They were still very much at the mercy of capricious and exacting French officials, who did not scruple to subject

them to needless humiliations ; and French spies never ceased from troubling. A strange hand-to-mouth existence was theirs in the scantily furnished ill-warmed apartments of the old castle. Many of the rooms were damp, out of repair and infested by rats. To organise a rat hunt was a favourite diversion of the elder princes on holiday afternoons.

Officers of the once famous Prussian army, and other persons of good social standing, came to the castle looking like "the very embodiment of hunger". But there was small scope for generosity in a household where plate and jewellery had gone to swell the fund which warded off annexation, and where the inmates were living as the Queen put it, "on the interest of their moral capital". To Louisa it was a sore trial not to possess the means of relieving distress. Personal discomfort was a minor evil, and could often be looked at from the comic point of view. More than once she remarked : "If Doctor Pangloss had been in Prussia now, he would certainly have ceased to maintain that 'Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds' ".<sup>1</sup>

The few remaining holders of court appointments had enough to do to keep up appearances. Louisa supplemented their wardrobes till she ran short herself. Before the birth of her youngest daughter, in February, 1808, she requested her brother George to send her a couple of pretty nightcaps from Paris—

<sup>1</sup> See Voltaire's *Candide*.

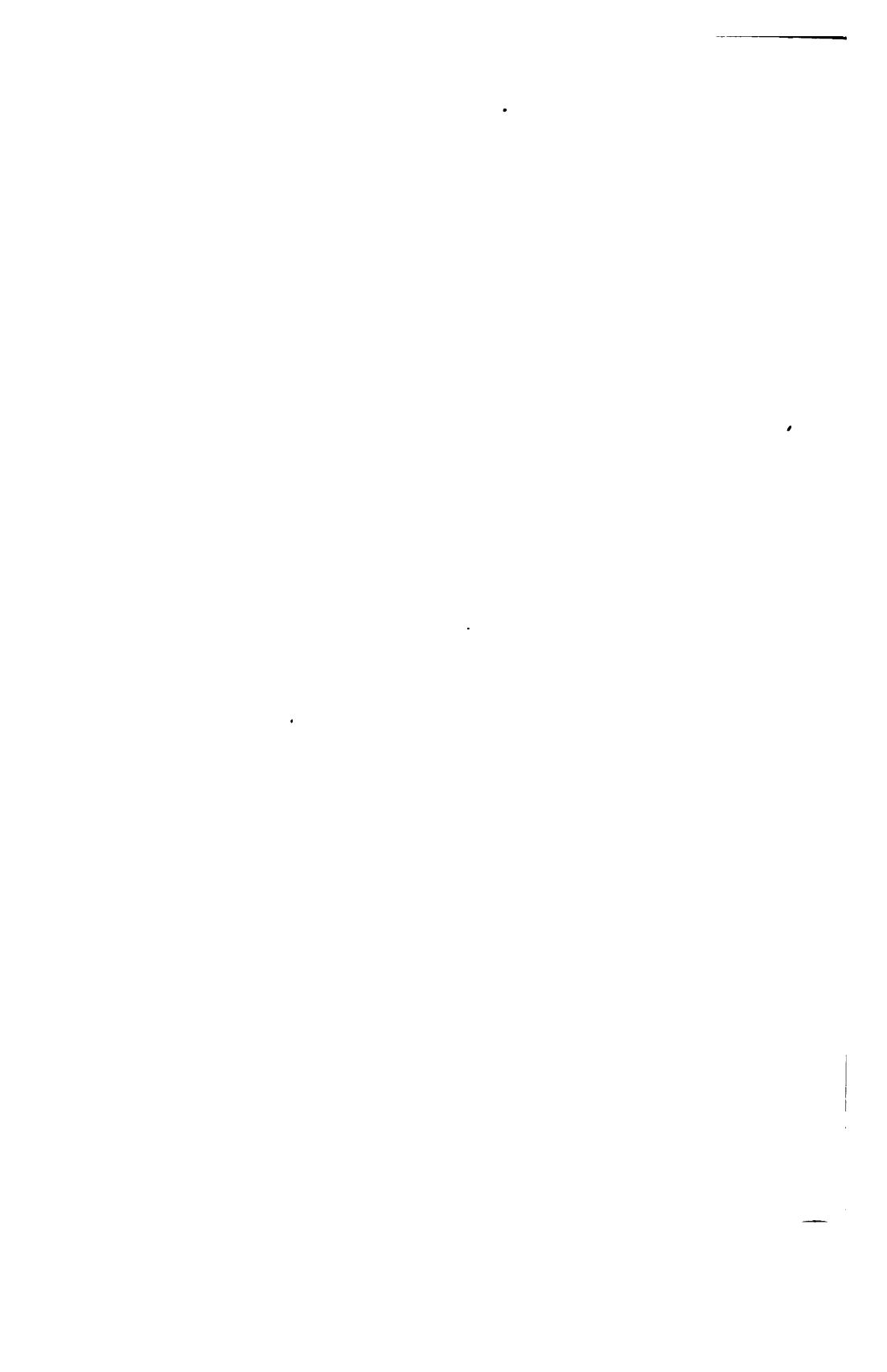
"not as a luxury but as a necessity. The caps I have are mere rags and there is nothing to be had here."

In accordance with the King's wish this infant was to receive no names but those of her mother. He could not, however, refrain from despondent remarks about being in a position which precluded him from asking reigning sovereigns to become sponsors for "the poor child," as he called her. "We still have the love of the people," said his wife; "let them be her godfathers and godmothers." Thus it came about that representatives of the Estates of East Prussia were invited to attend the christening ceremony, as sponsors for the little princess on behalf of the nation.

Her birth procured the Queen a few weeks of much-needed rest, during which she had the happiness of being cared for by her friend Frau von Berg. Recovery merely signified the taking up of a heavy burden of responsibility. Her husband's moodiness must often have tried her powers of endurance. "If only our dear King were less dejected and undecided," sighs Countess Voss. "I fear he will never again believe that things may take a turn for the better." Again, therefore, it fell to Queen Louisa to take courage and thought for both King and people, to tend the fire on the domestic hearth and the fire of national life. Quietly, unobtrusively, with infinite tact and infinite patience, she discharged her office

of mediator between her husband and the group of remarkable men who saw, in the very extremity of the country, a unique opportunity for thorough-going social and political reform. Stein, Hardenberg, Scharnhorst, Fichte, and William von Humboldt, these are the greatest of the makers of modern Prussia, though other famous men were associated with them in the work of regeneration. While sympathising with the ends of these disinterested workers, the King was often distrustful of their methods. But wherever friction was likely to occur, there also was the Queen ready to smooth away difficulties, prevent misunderstandings and cordially support every enthusiast in the good cause. Visitors to Königsberg are still shown the little room wherein she carried on her work for the redemption of her country. Its situation at the end of a long hall afforded her some security from the ubiquitous eavesdropper.

Her hearty sympathy was accorded to the members of the *Tugendbund*, or League of Virtue. This famous society was founded by disciples of Kant at Königsberg in the spring of 1808 with the primary object of arousing Prussian students to a sense of their moral responsibilities and of their duty towards their King and native land. The hope was expressed that the *Tugendbund* would form, as it were, a wall of defence round the reigning sovereign and the House of Hohenzollern. The scheme was submitted to Queen Louisa with a request that she would seek





GERHARD DAVID SCHARNHORST  
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY GEBAUER

to secure for it the support of her husband. This she readily undertook to do; but she was probably disappointed when the King's approval was given on condition that the members of the society should not concern themselves with politics. It was, however, found to be impossible for the founders of the League to carry out their intentions if political questions were entirely ignored. They were, therefore, discussed in secret. In after days Napoleon made more than one attempt to suppress the *Tugendbund*. But that was probably because he shared the general tendency to confuse it with the unacknowledged bond which afforded a means of secret communication between the more prominent reformers in Berlin and Königsberg and other patriots, chiefly military men, in the towns of Northern Germany. Unlike the *Tugendbund* this was a society with no formal organisation and no name. Its adherents referred to it as "the Committee". Amongst them were Stein, Scharnhorst, Fichte and Schleiermacher.

To Scharnhorst had been confided the task of re-organising the military system of Prussia. It was an undertaking fraught with manifold difficulties. To complete the subjugation of the country Napoleon decreed that the army should not exceed 42,000 men.

Scharnhorst began by abolishing the old method of partial conscription whereby men of the peasant class only were liable to twenty years of military service. He then instituted the modern system of

universal conscription, or a short period of service from men of every social class. Distinguished soldiers of all ranks were to be eligible as officers, and punishment by flogging was restricted to a few grave offences. With the manhood of the nation at his command, and ably supported by Gneisenau, the defender of Colberg, Scharnhorst was able to thwart Napoleon's intentions by nominally keeping the army within the prescribed limits, though qualified soldiers were promptly drafted into a secret reserve force, so as to make way for a constant stream of new recruits.

Thus Stein and Scharnhorst, by their civil and military reforms, laid the foundation of a greater and more permanent Prussian State than that which Napoleon had overthrown. Of its own free will the Government had acknowledged the rights of the individual man and enacted that they should take precedence of the rights of classes. But only very gradually could the people become aware of their newly acquired privileges. Since Napoleon was bent on extinguishing every spark of national sentiment, it was manifest that the reformers could make no open avowal of their objects. They were sowing the seed of a mighty harvest ; but meanwhile, in that age of revolutions, a critical period was being tided over by "interest on the moral capital" of the royal family, especially of the Queen.

There is abundant evidence that Louisa never lost sight of the nation's need of a moral and spirit-

ual revival. Her own example was a powerful impulse in the right direction. But it was the winged words of Fichte that most effectually roused the dormant conscience of the German people. During the gloomy winter of 1807-8, "with French bayonets gleaming outside the windows and French drums drowning his words, he delivered in Berlin the memorable series of addresses which sounded the *réveillé* in the ears of Germany, and did their part in driving those drums and bayonets out of the country".<sup>1</sup> With the fearlessness of a Hebrew prophet Fichte attributed to the sins and ignorance of the people the evils from which they were suffering, and summoned them to repentance and a return to God. He recalled the mighty deeds of their forefathers and pictured those that might yet be achieved if Germans would lay aside selfish considerations and become an educated and united nation. "A nation," said he, "which is capable of fixing its eyes firmly on that vision from the spiritual world—*Independence*; and of being possessed with the love of it, will assuredly prevail over a nation that is only used as the tool of foreign aggressiveness and for the subjugation of independent peoples." Those who listened to the *Addresses to the German Nation*, wondered how long it would be before Fichte was called upon to share the fate of the bookseller Palm. But Napoleon fortunately regarded him as an un-

<sup>1</sup> George Brandes, *The Romantic School in Germany*.

practical dreamer, and no objection was raised either to the lectures or to their subsequent publication.

In their earnestness, eloquence and plain speaking, Schleiermacher's sermons of this period have much in common with Fichte's addresses. They also were delivered in Berlin, to which city the great preacher had betaken himself when Halle was absorbed into Jerome Bonaparte's kingdom of Westphalia. The loss of this university town decided the King to act upon William von Humboldt's recommendation that a new seat of learning should presently be established in the capital city of Prussia.

During the early months of 1808 the King and Queen continued to reside in the old castle which, according to a contemporary writer, "looked as if it had been hung up in smoke since the days of the Thirty Years' War". The miry roads of Memel had tried their patience sorely, but the steep Königsberg streets were positively dangerous. A rough attempt had been made to pave, not the sides, but the whole of the thoroughfares by laying down huge slabs of granite. To devise some means of connecting them was not considered needful. The intervening gaps formed convenient receptacles for rain-water and other superfluities. If they likewise formed inconvenient snares for the feet of unwary pedestrians, that was a matter of no moment save to the owners of sprained or broken limbs. "Driving in Königsberg," said Goethe's friend Zelter, "is every bit as bad as walking. You merely secure the safety

of your legs by risking ribs and shoulder bones." Fortunately for Queen Louisa, with her wholesome love of fresh air, it did not take long to drive through one of the city gates to pleasant suburbs and thence into the open country. As the weather became warmer, she often found herself longing for the airy apartments and shady parks of Sans Souci and Charlottenburg. She was, however, ready to make the most of "a little garden house" not far from Königsberg which had been placed at the King's disposal. It was situated in a tract of country dotted over with peasant holdings and known as the Huben. The new royal residence had formerly belonged to a literary man, Hippel by name. He had planted trees and laid out flower beds; and though by 1808 the property had passed into other hands, it was usually referred to as Hippel's Garden. Its modern name is *Luisenwahl* (Louisa's choice), and the road leading to it from Königsberg is the *Luisenweg*. The garden house contained four rooms, and only the baby girl accompanied her parents to the Huben. The other children were lodged in the city and came and went daily, while the Queen's ladies-in-waiting had rooms in an adjacent village. Thus it became possible for Louisa to spend long hours out of doors and to gather strength in mind and body. Not that she was ever idle.<sup>1</sup> She kept herself informed of all that was taking place, gave audience to many of the

<sup>1</sup> She had, as she herself remarked, "good books, a good conscience and a good piano"—her one luxury.

leading men of the day, noted the hopeful aspects of Napoleon's pre-occupation with Spain, and read and wrote and planned. She was visited by certain interesting Königsberg residents with whom she had become acquainted during her visit to her sister Frederica in 1807. Amongst them were the fatherly old Councillor Scheffner and Borowsky, the future Archbishop of Prussia. Madame de Krüdener was no longer within reach. But the following letter to her from Queen Louisa shows that the words of the famous mystic had been as seed sown in fruitful soil :—

"To your kind heart I owe a confession. I am convinced that you will receive it with tears of joy. Through you I have become better than I used to be. Your faithful words and our talks about religion and Christianity have made a lasting impression on me. I have taken a deeper interest in spiritual things. I was always alive to their reality and importance ; but, in my discernment of them, there was more of feeling than of knowledge. Our seasons of contemplation have had the most comforting results. I have drawn nearer to God, my faith has become stronger ; and so, in the midst of misfortune, of injustice, and of vexations without number, I am never without support, never wholly unhappy. Add to this the mercy of a loving God who has not suffered me to become embittered, but has kept my heart so full of love and goodwill for my fellow-creatures, that I am constrained to help and rescue them.

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You will understand that I can never be utterly miserable since I now possess the springs of purest joy. With the eye of truth I have perceived the vanity of earthly greatness, and its nothingness in comparison with treasures in heaven. Yes, I have attained to a tranquillity of soul, an inward peace which gives me ground for hope that I shall be enabled to endure every disposal of events, every form of suffering, with the resignation of a true Christian, believing that everything is ordained by God for my sanctification. It is thus that I now regard the weight of affliction which bowed us to the earth. Promise me that you will always speak to me with the voice of truth."

The hope expressed in this record of spiritual progress was realised. For Louisa there was to be no escape from trouble and anxiety, but the inward light burned steadily to the end. Taken by itself the mysticism of Madame de Krüdener would hardly have satisfied the Queen. As a reviving influence it was most helpful. But she was likewise all the better for Bishop Borowsky's little homilies on the interpretation of Scripture and the work and words of Luther. To a correspondent he expresses his satisfaction that "the faith of our honoured Queen is so simple yet so vital, with no trace of anything forced, artificial or merely sentimental. She bases all her religious views, feelings and aspirations on the firm foundation of the Word of God as revealed in the Bible. The confidence which she reposes in

me gives me opportunities of encouraging her to search the Scriptures. She has a special love for the Psalms. Their peculiar inspiration appeals to her beautiful, poetic nature and seem to give wings to her soul."

Sometimes the Queen talked and Borowsky listened. He has made it possible for us to listen too. "Last Sunday," he says, "I had the honour of being received by Her Majesty. I found her alone in her sitting-room reading the Psalter. Rising quickly, she came forward to meet me saying: 'I have been getting into the very spirit of the wonderful 126th Psalm of which we were speaking lately. The more I seek to comprehend it, the more it attracts me by its grandeur of thought and charm of expression. I do not know when anything has had such an ennobling and comforting influence on my mind as these precious words. How simply, in those delightful pictures of seedtime and harvest, do they tell of deep, heartfelt sorrow and the fruits it may bring forth. . . . It is a Psalm of sadness and of victory, of resignation and the most joyful confidence; an elegy and a hymn, a hallelujah while the tears are falling. It makes me think of the dew-drops in a beautiful flower, glittering in the morning light. I have read it and re-read till it is imprinted on my memory.'" Then, continues Borowsky, "the Queen began to repeat, in clear, low tones, the Psalm which promises to those who trust in God, a harvest of joy for their sowing in tears. The words

seemed to be set to music—the music of her heart. As she uttered them she appeared to me more beautiful than ever."

Louisa no longer doubted that the Lord would turn again the captivity of Prussia, and she was eager to do all that she could to hasten the hour of deliverance. Again she lamented the inadequacy of her early education. But for that she fancied that she might have accomplished more. Yet it was precisely the sense of her own deficiency which enabled her to perceive so clearly that the ruin of Prussia was largely the result of ignorance. She began to direct her efforts more systematically to the overcoming of ignorance in herself, her children and the people generally. Her interest was aroused by reports of a course of lectures on the history of modern Europe, which Professor Süvern was delivering to the students at Königsberg University and also to an audience of thoughtful men and women. She requested her friend Councillor Scheffner to procure summaries of the discourses or copies of Süvern's manuscripts. These she studied diligently as she sat in Hippel's Garden, marking all obscure words and passages and then calling upon Scheffner to explain them either by word of mouth or in writing. A special charm and *naïveté* characterises her letters to the old Councillor. Thus, on 20th June, 1808, she writes :—

"Good morning, Herr Scheffner. I hope you are feeling better than I do. I am to-day sending back

the fourth and fifth lectures. They have given me more pleasure than I can describe in words. For this I would like to say a personal 'thank you' to Professor Süvern. But, between ourselves, I am afraid to suggest an interview on account of my ignorance. I am deeply convinced of the great truths on which his line of argument rests. How sad to think of the transitoriness of the beautiful world of the Greeks and the strong world of the Romans. The account of their decline and humiliation moved me deeply. There was so much that resembled what is taking place at the present day. If only the eyes of men could be opened, if only they could see what is going on around them, they might be strengthened to cast off the yoke of slavery. It is because they do not perceive what should be done that we find no one coming forward, like a knight of olden times, to champion the cause of justice, faith and love. In the chapel of the castle I have knelt and prayed fervently to the Almighty for the coming of brighter, better times. Should I not live to see them, I besought Him that my request might still be granted to my children and my people. I know full well that the times we live in do not make themselves. They are what they are because men have made them so. Therefore I hope that my children will grow up to be good men and women, that they may have a salutary influence on their times.

"To return to the manuscripts. When I see how I have scribbled over them with my pencil I am quite

ashamed of myself, because Stein is going to read them next. He does not know me so well as you do, and whatever will he think? Only one who knows me well can rightly decipher these hieroglyphics of my heart. My own hopes and experiences, my appointed lot, the past, the present and the future—all have been indicated, and the notes would have been longer still if I could have felt that no eye but yours would see them.

"Now, for a few questions. I want to know what is meant by the reference to the Punic Wars. Were they all waged against the Carthaginians? Tell me too about the disturbances which were headed by the Gracchi. Then please turn to the fourth lecture and read the lines where I have put a little cross in the margin. Do they refer to the period which Süvern calls the age of the Teutons when knighthood attained its highest point of development? When Stein has read the manuscripts, please send them back to me, they afford me such glorious distraction from the oppressive present. I have just one more page to read. Then I will wrap up the parcel. Did I rightly understand that the age of the Teutons came to an end because men gave more heed to feelings and imagination than to the voice of wisdom? Tell me too what is meant by a 'hierarchy'. I seem to have no clear meaning to attach to the word. This letter is long enough in all conscience. I have bothered you with so many inquiries. But it is only stupid people who are too

much ashamed of their ignorance to ask questions, and I simply detest stupidity. I feel sure you will be good to me and tell me what I want to know, and heal those wounds I have been inflicting on my vanity, though I am willing to sacrifice it in a good cause. You spoke of sending me the sixth lecture without the peroration. But why? Assuring you of my friendship and esteem, I am your affectionate Louisa."

The Queen's desire to meet and talk with Süvern proved stronger than her fear that he would think slightly of one who had so little book-learning. At all events she hoped he would regard her as a seeker after truth. In a letter to her sister Frederica, she records her disappointment that he should have thought it necessary to compliment her on the correctness of her historical conclusions and to thank her for her flattering opinion of his lectures. "He was dazzled," writes Louisa, "by my association with the idea of royalty. I told him that my opinions, favourable or otherwise, could have no possible value for an authority on history. Then, to make up, I said I would always be grateful to him for having provided the well of knowledge which had refreshed my weary spirit in a time of tribulation. I hope he understood what I meant to impress upon him, namely, that truth is precious to me above all things else and that a historical scholar should love it as his soul."

Süvern apparently understood with whom he had

to deal. In subsequent interviews he made such a favourable impression on the Queen that she consulted Stein as to the advisability of appointing him tutor to the Crown Prince, who was getting beyond the management of Delbrück. Stein shared Her Majesty's conviction of the value of a thorough knowledge of history, but did not consider that Süvern had sufficient acquaintance with practical affairs to qualify him for the position.

To Scheffner Queen Louisa also confided her anxiety about the education of a future king. "It is," as she truly says, "a subject about which even Frederick the Great had mistaken ideas." There is no more striking commentary on the shortcomings of Frederick William III. than his wife's memorandum of what should be kept in view in the upbringing of their eldest son. "The education of a Crown Prince is insufficient if it merely aims at making him a just, religious and morally good man. He must have a thorough knowledge of the country and all that concerns it, and clear notions of politics. He must also become accustomed to take wide views of things in general, so that he may be capable of projecting great enterprises and, if possible, bringing them to a successful issue. Delbrück is not the man to compass this."

Looking back over the history of Prussia, Queen Louisa perceived that it was a country which had been peculiarly dependent on its rulers, and this dependence had increased during the reign of Frederick

the Great. If King and people were to continue to stand or fall together, there was need of exceptional care in the development of the lovable, gifted boy who would one day be at the head of the State. In reply to a letter from her brother George, Louisa writes : " You ask me about my children. They are all dear and good. I expect great things of Fritz. He is so kind-hearted, has so much spirit and a real love of knowledge. But his manners are still detestable, and call for much attention and severity on my part. For outward bearing is not to be dissociated from the inward life. He who is more inclined to shove with his elbows than to put forth his hand and gently attract attention or remove something that is in his way, has something of a similar nature going on in his mind. This prevents perfect inward harmony as surely as the outward act offends the eye. Believe me, George, I have thought this out carefully and proved it true. Fritz is very sensitive. When I came back from Tilsit, I said to him, with much emotion : ' Now I will tell you all about the great sacrifice which I have just made for the King, for my dear children and for the country. It cost me a great effort, but your happiness is dear to me. It is everything to me.' His tears fell fast, and the whole evening afterwards he was very subdued and hardly to be consoled. But he must learn early to value the self-sacrifice of others, that the resolution to do only that which is right and unselfish may grow and ripen in him.



QUEEN LOUISA AND HER TWO ELDER SONS ON THE LUISENWEG,  
NEAR KÖNIGSBERG  
AFTER THE PAINTING BY C. STEFFECK



"William is bright and good too, but never very strong physically. Charlotte is pure as gold, gentle and merry. Carl is not unlike Fritz, but thanks to his nurse, his general behaviour is better. The King and I call Alexandrina 'the little autocrat,' there is something so very decided and comical about her. Old Voss is always the same, grave or gay according to circumstances. She has felt our misfortunes very keenly. Considering her eighty years, her mental activity is astonishing."

If Queen Louisa had lived long enough to carry out her ideas with regard to the education of her Fritz, there would have been less of sadness and disappointment in the story of his life and reign. Handsome, thoughtful, cultured, eager to do his duty, he resembled her more than any of her children. The tutor eventually chosen for him was Ancillon, who had been designated for the post by Stein. The choice of such a man shows that even distinguished statesmen may err. Ancillon combined a certain literary gift with experience of practical politics. But his knowledge rested on very shallow foundations, and he was wholly incapable of training an intensely imaginative youth to see things as they are and to take wide philosophical views of government. Given adequate opportunity, it is inconceivable that the keen-sighted Queen would not have realised Ancillon's limitations and replaced him by a more competent teacher. Thus might have been prevented Frederick William IV.'s failure as a king—

a failure due to lack of insight into the spirit of the age and the temper of his people. Both he and his brother William were devoted to the memory of their mother. They often recalled hours spent with her in Hippel's Garden. Specially vivid was their recollection of one day when she was very downcast, and they went out and gathered nosegays of blue cornflowers for her. Novalis had defined the object of romantic longing as "a blue flower". Louisa was doubtless familiar with the significance that had come to be attributed to flowers of a colour of which she had always been fond. And the thought of all that she had vainly longed for may have caused her tears to fall upon her sons' gifts. From that day they looked upon the blue cornflower as a sacred symbol.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE CONGRESS AT ERFURT. THE KING AND QUEEN OF PRUSSIA VISIT ST. PETERSBURG

BY the middle of September, 1808, Queen Louisa was again resident in Königsberg. Like other victims of Napoleon's tyranny, she had been following with profound interest the course of events in Spain. In the month of May, Charles IV. and his son were treacherously induced to renounce their claims to the throne of that country. The Emperor then bestowed the crown on his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, and announced that he was "master of the situation in Spain as in the rest of Europe". But he had yet to reckon with the Spanish people—a people goaded to fury by his disregard of their patriotic and religious feelings. For he had not only handed over their country to a stranger; he had, almost simultaneously, annexed the Papal States and made the Pope virtually a prisoner.

The Spaniards flew to arms with the conviction that they were engaging in a holy war. In his endeavour to make himself supreme in Europe, Napoleon had hitherto been opposed by armies sent into the field by the governments of various coun-

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tries ; and his victories over the armies enabled him to coerce the governments. But he had never met with serious opposition from the people in general. They had either shown themselves indifferent or they had been favourable to him as the representative of the principles of the French Revolution. He was now to learn what it meant to contend with a people whose spirit of nationality had been aroused. The troops which he had despatched to Spain were repulsed at Saragossa and forced to surrender at Baylen (June, 1808). Joseph Bonaparte was driven from Madrid, and the British army, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, which had been sent to assist the Spaniards, defeated Marshal Junot in Portugal.

Napoleon speedily realised that he could only hope to subdue the Peninsula and restore the prestige of his army by taking the field in person. Before doing so, it was needful to have some guarantee for the maintenance of his authority in Germany. Austria was giving signs of increased restlessness. She had bitterly resented being obliged to cede the Tyrol to Bavaria after the Battle of Austerlitz. And Napoleon's offer of compensation by a restoration of Silesia had been unexpectedly declined. This was a sure sign that she was ready to ally herself with her northern neighbour.

Prince William of Prussia still remained in Paris. In accordance with Stein's instructions, he evaded any suggestion of affixing his signature to the document setting forth the French claims. From time to

time he obtained an interview with the Emperor and besought him to accord more favourable terms to Prussia. On one occasion he offered himself and his young wife as hostages until the indemnity had been paid in reasonable instalments. "This is very noble," said the embarrassed Napoleon, "but it is quite impossible." He was, in fact, merely biding his time for an opportunity of absorbing Prussia into his Rhenish Confederation. No arguments but those of the Czar had any weight with him. The friends of Prussia hoped that some concessions might be made at the forthcoming meeting between Napoleon and the Russian Emperor at Erfurt, in Saxony. It was arranged that the Czar should travel by way of Königsberg and that Stein should accompany him to the Congress.

Stein, for his part, had ceased to expect that anything could be gained by direct dealings with Napoleon. He had also come to the conclusion that the Prussian Government might as well pour water into a sieve as continue to send sums of money to Paris, since they were not being regarded as part payment of the entire claim. It was becoming manifest that the country could only be saved by organising a successful national rising in conjunction with Austria. Napoleon's absence in Spain seemed likely to furnish an excellent opportunity of setting him at defiance.

The Prussian reformers, as a whole, were keenly interested in the trend of events in Austria. When

Queen Louisa heard of the proposed meeting of the Emperors at Erfurt, she fathomed Napoleon's intention of bringing all his powers of persuasion to bear on Alexander, in order to secure his active support during the campaign in the Spanish Peninsula. Since the Peace of Tilsit she had ceased to correspond with the Czar; but in the interest of the good cause letters from her again began to find their way to St. Petersburg. In June, 1808, she writes: "With all the tenderness of friendship, I conjure you to be on your guard against that accomplished liar Napoleon. Listen to my voice pleading with you for the sake of your honour, dear to me as my own, not to let yourself be inveigled into any undertaking opposed to the interests of the Austrians. I am positive that you will be asked to side against them. For heaven's sake, refuse. I know that, since the last war, you have had just grounds of complaint against the Emperor of Austria. Forget them all. Be magnanimous. Think only of the saving of Europe, and pardon. Do not fancy that this infamous Napoleon has any more regard for you than he has for me. His professions of friendship merely signify that he has an axe of his own to grind and that you are to assist in the process. But you must heed only the promptings of your heart. I appeal to that heart of yours, so inclined to right action, so averse to all wrong-doing and injustice."

On 18th September, Alexander duly arrived at

Königsberg. He was willing to make a fresh effort to obtain more lenient terms for Prussia, but he would not commit himself to anything further. Still, Louisa was hopeful that he would do naught to impede the German struggle for liberty. Poor Queen! always hoping, always doomed to disappointment. The day after Alexander's departure found her mourning because the work of many months had been undone by the criminal carelessness of an official, who acted as one of Stein's messengers. His disregard of precautions had enabled the French to get possession of a letter in which the minister had described certain of his schemes. Napoleon was thus provided with the pretext for which he had been in search. He published the letter to prove the impossibility of relying on Prussian promises, oblivious of the fact that the Prussians were doing their utmost not to make promises they could not fulfil. His threats of vengeance had the desired effect of forcing Prince William to believe that it was expedient to accede to his demands. This was a fatal step. It enabled Napoleon to make little response to the expostulations of the Czar. He retained possession of the Prussian fortresses while the indemnity was merely reduced to a hundred and twenty million francs.

"This is the last straw," exclaimed Countess Voss. "Goltz has set out to join the Czar instead of Stein. The Queen is inconsolable, the King is furious with rage at this new calamity. He has

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seen Stein, but it is doubtful if the latter can remain in the ministry." Stein himself had no doubts on the subject and promptly resigned, though he did not immediately leave Königsberg. Had he been vigorously supported by the King, he might have continued to direct the policy of the country and to take steps to bring about an effective alliance between Prussia and Austria. But, like other zealous reformers, he had many enemies, and the party opposed to him contrived to get the ear of His Majesty. When Stein sought to convince him that the times were ripe for a new campaign against France, Frederick William declined to co-operate with Austria unless Russia joined the coalition. Of this there was little prospect. At Erfurt, Alexander's second visit to Napoleon was being celebrated with oriental magnificence. Invitations had been issued to the kings and princes of Germany, who had ranged themselves on the side of France, and Napoleon certainly succeeded in impressing them with a sense of their utter dependence on himself. The Franco-Russian alliance, entered into at Tilsit, was renewed at Erfurt. In return for reiterated promises of an extension of territory on his southwestern frontier, Alexander undertook to disconcert any attempt of the Austrians to regain their independence. At the same time he refused to acquiesce in a proposal for their disarmament.

It is a significant fact that, when for the first time Napoleon engages in a struggle with a nation as op-

posed to a government, he is constrained to seek assistance from a representative of one of those ancient dynasties which he had professed to despise. Even a political alliance does not afford him adequate security, and he begins to scheme for a divorce from Josephine which might make it possible for him to marry one of the sisters of the Czar.

On his way back to Russia, Alexander spent three days at Königsberg. He had an interview with Stein which convinced the latter that the imperial visitor had no immediate intention of breaking away from his new ally. In his converse with the King and Queen, the Czar probably passed lightly over his contract with Napoleon, and dwelt more on the fact, which he knew would give them pleasure, of his refusal to allow any interference with the individual liberty of the Austrians. To Queen Louisa it was inconceivable that Alexander would elect to remain passive if the buffer state between his dominions and those of Napoleon were engaged in a fight to the death. She was disappointed that he did not openly avow his intention of siding with the southern Germans. For this would have overcome her husband's doubts as to the advisability of making common cause with them.

The Russian Emperor was evidently sorry that he could not give his friends the assurances they expected; and, by way of expressing his regard for them personally, he cordially invited them to visit him at St. Petersburg. Louisa caught eagerly at

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the suggestion ; for would it not afford her frequent opportunities of discussing the political situation with Alexander? Once again she would go and plead her cause, the cause of liberty, before a mighty ruler. This time she felt sure that she would not be sent away empty.

It was a disagreeable surprise to discover that Stein strongly disapproved of the project. He was persuaded that the Czar would listen to no suggestions about joining a coalition against France. He was also sure that constant association with men who were under the spell of Napoleon would intensify the King's dread of declaring war against him. To their Majesties he represented the extreme difficulty of meeting the expense of such a journey. On this occasion, however, Louisa gave heed to the counsels of less disinterested advisers, and the visit to Russia was decided upon.

It is much to be regretted that anything should have occurred to mar the good understanding between the Queen and the illustrious statesman. Both had the same great objects at heart, and it had been well if the period during which they worked together for the furtherance of these objects could have been prolonged. In the circumstances Stein could serve no purpose by remaining in East Prussia and he set out for Berlin. From his friendly parting with the King, Napoleon inferred that he would soon be recalled, and issued orders for his arrest. But Stein fortunately escaped into Hungary.

In the sequel his view of the visit to Russia proved to be correct. If Louisa ever regretted her opposition to one whom she always regarded as a great man, she never had an opportunity of telling him so. When the fall of Napoleon brought Stein once more to the head of the Prussian Government the Queen was no longer among the living.

It must not, however, be overlooked that, at the time, there was a good deal to be said in favour of her attitude. Few of her contemporaries foresaw so clearly as she did that, if Austria were abandoned to Napoleon, he would speedily find a pretext for attempting the conquest of Russia. She was therefore justified in expecting Alexander to realise that it was to his own interest to prevent the French from tightening their hold on Central Europe.

The visit to Russia also suggested a way out of a serious dilemma. Ever since the Congress of Erfurt, Napoleon had been reiterating that there was now no reason why the Prussian royal family should not return to Berlin. His reason was perfectly obvious. He desired that they should be as near Paris as possible during his absence in Spain. Much as they loved their capital, the King and Queen were loth to take any step which would bring them under the more direct surveillance of the enemy. In view of his forthcoming absence from the country, Frederick William was able to put off his return to Berlin though Prussian troops were sent to garrison the city in place of the departing French.

On 24th December, 1808, the King and Queen celebrated Christmas with their family. This was also the fifteenth anniversary of their marriage. Three days later they were driving along the familiar road from Königsberg to Memel. Their retinue was as restricted as possible; but amongst their fellow-travellers were the King's brother, Prince William, recently returned from Paris; General Scharnhorst and the indefatigable Countess Voss. After a night's rest in their city of refuge, their Majesties proceeded to the frontier under happier conditions than had once seemed possible. On the farther side officers of the Russian army were waiting to greet them in the name of the Czar. At the first town in which they halted for the night, they were received with military honours, and they must presently have felt as if they had come to be the guests of a fairy prince, so wonderful were the arrangements for their reception. A letter of welcome from Alexander was put into their hands. Presents of warm fur garments awaited them. Cooks and other servants had been sent from St. Petersburg to make adequate preparation for their needs. The Czar had even remembered to give special injunctions that his German visitors should be duly supplied with beer! Relays of horses for the sleighs, relays of soldiers for the military escort awaited the travellers at every stopping place.

Despite this thoughtful anticipation of their wants, the journey of ten days' duration in a temperature many degrees below the freezing point, was a trying

experience for the travellers, but most of all for the Queen with her love of sunshine and warmth. The last halt of the journey was made at Strelna, a shooting lodge belonging to the Grand Duke Constantine. Considering his sinister influence on the fate of Prussia, their Majesties would no doubt have preferred that another member of the imperial family should have been the first to greet them. But supper had scarcely begun when the door of the room flew open and they were cheered by the unexpected appearance of Alexander himself, brimming over with friendliness and hospitality. He stayed but a short while. Next day, however, he returned to Strelna in order to escort his guests to St. Petersburg.

Before entering the city the sleighs were abandoned. The Emperor and the King proceeded on horseback. The Queen followed in a huge coach with glass panels. It recalled to her the one in which she had made her first public appearance in Berlin. The crowds, the troops lining the streets, the presence of Countess Voss were likewise so many reminders of the eventful day which now seemed so remote. "I have outlived myself" was Louisa's sorrowful exclamation when she was oppressed by the contrast between past and present.

In her state carriage she passed through the snowy streets to the Winter Palace where she was awaited by the ladies of the imperial household. The Czar's wife and mother were evidently relieved to find that this sad-eyed woman of thirty-two was

not so alluringly beautiful as rumour had suggested. They were captivated by her charm of manner, and soon felt quite at home with her.

Like a chapter in the *Arabian Nights* is Queen Louisa's description of the gorgeous festivities at the Russian court. They included celebrations of imperial birthdays and the marriage of the Czar's sister Catherine to the Duke of Courland. The royal guests were honoured in every possible way, and presents were literally showered upon them. One thing only marred their felicity. This was Alexander's persistent evasion of private intercourse. More than a week elapsed before Louisa found an opportunity of speaking to him on the subject nearest her heart. Yet neither then nor on any other occasion could she elicit the promise she had come so far to seek. Where the Queen failed it was not likely that her husband would succeed. His tentative efforts to turn the conversation in the desired direction met with no encouragement. Had he but known it, Alexander was boasting to Napoleon of the skill with which he avoided political topics in his talks with the King of Prussia.

To the young Empress Elizabeth and her mother-in-law, Louisa was able to pour forth her troubles and anxieties without reserve. She found them frankly sympathetic. The Dowager Empress described how she had hurried on the marriage of her daughter Catherine at the very first hint that Napoleon aspired to a matrimonial alliance with Russia.

It would have comforted the sorrowful heart of Queen Louisa could she have foreseen that the check to Napoleon's ambition in this direction would ultimately lead to the dissolution of his political union with Alexander. It would also have been a joy to her to have known that the boy Grand Duke Nicholas, who was destined to succeed to his brother's throne, would one day cement the bond between the ruling families of Russia and Prussia by marrying her daughter Charlotte. But all this was hidden in the future. For the present the Queen had to renounce the prospect of successful mediation which would have justified her journey from the political standpoint. Still it was much to have enjoyed a respite from the terrible strain of the life at Königsberg, and to have had an opportunity of forming new and delightful friendships. Not even her physical suffering from the extreme cold of the Russian winter could reconcile her to the thought of bidding farewell to those from whom she had received so much kindness. As originally planned, the sojourn in St. Petersburg was to last a fortnight only. It was extended to nearly four weeks. On 31st January, 1809, the return journey was begun. The Empress Elizabeth drove with the Queen to Strelna and took leave of her there. The Czar accompanied his guests a stage further. Queen Louisa's parting words—the last words she ever spoke to him—were a final reminder that upon his action depended the future happiness of Prussia and of the Prussian royal family.

On her return from Strelna the Empress Elizabeth wrote to her mother : "There is no need for me to measure my words and exercise prudence in speaking of the Queen of Prussia. It is impossible for anyone to be more delightful, more easy to get on with than she is. I cannot think how those reports about her affectation and coquetry originated. I have never seen a trace of any such thing. She was extremely sociable, and one could note the liveliness of her natural disposition. Her relations with the King were quite a pleasure to me. In society she was sure of her position and quite at her ease. Alone with me she was genuinely friendly and confidential. If there is any shade in her portrait I assure you it is barely perceptible."

On 10th February the travellers re-entered Königsberg after an absence of six weeks. With mingled feelings Queen Louisa reviewed her experiences. On the political side the prospect was no brighter. To Frau von Berg she wrote: "I came as I went, and I say to you, as I have said before, 'My kingdom is not of this world '".

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CAMPAIGN OF WAGRAM

NOTWITHSTANDING the inability of the German patriots to form a new coalition, the Austrians did not abandon hope of being able to cripple the power of Napoleon. Like Queen Louisa, the Emperor Francis believed that, if the Czar did not openly rally to his side, he might yet be trusted to give secret assistance to the enterprise. It was also expected that a timely diversion would be caused by the landing of English auxiliaries in the north of Europe. Early in 1807 the Tyrolese were summoned to arms by their peasant leader, Andreas Hofer. In a brief space of time they succeeded in ridding their mountainous country of all representatives of the hated Franco-Bavarian overlordship. Great was their joy when the Emperor Francis solemnly declared that he would never again consent to a peace which did not recognise the Tyrol as an integral portion of the Austrian Empire.

Throughout the whole country preparations for war were hurried on amidst demonstrations of popular enthusiasm such as had been associated with no previous campaign. The Chancellor, Count

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Stadion, promised to introduce reforms similar to those which Stein had inaugurated in Prussia. The ablest Austrian general, the Archduke Charles, had already taken steps to improve the condition of the soldiers. The army had consequently become more representative of the nation than it had ever been before. There was generous recognition that more than the fate of Austria was at stake. In his proclamation to the soldiers, the Archduke Charles sought to impress upon them that the freedom of Europe had taken refuge under their banners and that their triumphs would mean the deliverance of their enslaved German brethren.

The Prussians were not unresponsive. Divers champions of the "good cause" made desperate but hopelessly isolated attempts to force the King's hand and turn the Austrian rising into a revolt of Germany. The most memorable of these efforts was that of Lieutenant Schill who had been associated with Gneisenau in the successful defence of Colberg. When the French evacuated Berlin in the end of the year 1808, Schill and his regiment of hussars were amongst the Prussian troops sent to take possession of the city in the name of the King. Some consternation was felt at headquarters when it became known with what demonstrations of enthusiasm Schill had been received by the populace. In his regiment were many young men of noble birth. Under the influence of Schill, they all became ardent patriots. He was specially devoted to Queen Louisa and used

to exhibit as his proudest possession a pocket-book in which she had written, "To the brave Herr Schill". On 28th April, 1809, Schill marched his men out of Berlin as if for military exercise. They, however, proceeded towards Magdeburg with the intention of recapturing the fortress, the loss of which had so sorely grieved their Queen. Success attended their first skirmish with the enemy, and Schill was hopeful that his action would be interpreted as a signal that the day had dawned when it behoved every patriot to take up arms for his country. He might have gained his end if Frederick William had inherited the daring spirit of his ancestors and encouraged the movement instead of disclaiming all connection with it. Unsupported, Schill could only fight his way to the Baltic coast in the expectation that he and his regiment would be rescued by the English warships. Failing to communicate with the admiral he was overpowered and slain, and those of his followers who were taken alive by the enemy were afterwards condemned to be shot. But their unflinching courage made a deep impression on their fellow-countrymen. Even the youngest of the prisoners, a lad of nineteen, refused life and liberty on condition of taking service in the French army. Wordsworth's fine sonnet on Schill compares him to "a meteor in a darksome night". He was, however, visible long enough to indicate the independent course of action taken by other patriots in 1813.

Frederick William was nervously apprehensive

lest Napoleon should make this episode a pretext for further exactions. But he had too much on hand to run the risk of stirring up further opposition in Prussia. He contented himself with publishing a caricature of Queen Louisa attired in the uniform of Schill's regiment. This was an indication that he still regarded her as a more serious adversary than her husband.

It has been maintained that, from the outset, she knew and approved of Schill's design. Be this as it may, she certainly grieved much for the tragic issue of the enterprise and for the almost simultaneous extinction of every hope which she had cherished during recent months. The hour of Germany's emancipation had not yet come. At the first report of the uprising in Austria Napoleon hastened back from Spain. In the first serious encounter with the enemy the advantage was with the Archduke Charles. Had he been adequately supported the French Emperor might have been brought to bay in 1809 instead of 1813. But Russia remained neutral; the English force failed to land in Northern Germany; and, as we have seen, the isolated efforts of Prussian enthusiasts could effect nothing. Alone the Austrians soon found themselves engaged in an unequal struggle which ended in their utter defeat at the Battle of Wagram, 6th July, 1809.

The hopeless outlook of Prussia at this period is reflected in a letter from Queen Louisa to her father. "It is all over with us," she writes, "if not forever, at

least for some time to come. I cannot look for any happy issue to our troubles in my own lifetime. I am resigned to this dispensation of the Divine will; and, if earthly joy is denied me, I still possess the spiritual happiness which is far better.

" Day by day I see more clearly that what has befallen us was inevitable. God is manifestly bringing about a great change in the governance of the world. There is to be a new order of things because the old order had survived its purpose and, having but a semblance of life, it almost fell to pieces of itself. As for Prussia she had gone to sleep on the laurels of Frederick the Great, regardless of the fact that just because he was the master of his century, he was also the harbinger of a new age. As we did not move with the times we have been outdistanced by them. No one realises this now more clearly than the King. I have just had a long talk with him. More than once he repeated, as if to himself, 'things must be very different with us in future'. But plans nobly conceived and carefully thought out are often brought to confusion. The French Emperor certainly surpasses us in long-headedness and subtlety. Even when the Russians and Prussians fought like lions and came off victorious, it was they who abandoned the field, and the enemy who remained in possession. We would be all the better for taking lessons from Napoleon. Then what we have suffered at his hands would not be unmitigated loss. It would be blasphemy to say, 'The Lord is with him'. But he is,

beyond all question, an instrument in the hand of the Almighty for doing away with meaningless institutions which had come to be mere excrescences on the visible order of things.

"A brighter day will dawn. We cannot put our trust in a perfect Being and despair of that. But good can never be the outcome of evil. Therefore I do not believe that the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte is firmly and immovably seated on that splendid throne of his. Stability proceeds from truth and justice. He is all for expediency and worldly wisdom. His goings are not ordered in accordance with the eternal laws. He is guided by the circumstances of the moment. Because of this his rule is stained by acts of injustice. He has no thought of furthering noble ends or benefiting his fellow-men. His insatiable ambition prevents him from seeing beyond himself and his personal interests. Many will admire him, but few will have any affection for him. He is dazzled by his past good fortune and fancies that everything is possible to him. That is to say, he has ceased to exercise moderation: and the man who cannot hold a medium course is sure to lose his balance and come to the ground. I believe firmly in God and in the moral order of the universe. And, since there is no moral order in a reign of brute force, I am hopeful that the gloomy present will be succeeded by a brighter future. This is likewise the hope, the wish, the expectation of the nobler natures amongst us. We must not suffer ourselves to be led

astray by those who chant the praises of the present epoch and of their great hero who dominates it. We cannot recall all that has happened, all that is still happening, and say, 'these are the last, best things'. They are but the means of clearing the way for the attainment of some great end, hidden as yet in the far distance. It may be that we shall die before it is revealed. God's will be done: in everything His will be done. Meantime I derive confidence and strength and courage and cheerfulness from this hope which I cherish deep down in my heart. How transitory are the things of this world after all! For us they will soon be over. Only let us give heed that we are ripening in all goodness as the swift days pass.

"This, dear father, is my political confession of faith, in so far as I can think things out and piece them together in my woman's way. Insufficient it may be, yet it serves my turn. But forgive me for troubling you with my opinions, though they will enable you to realise that the principles of Christianity which I owe to your teaching and example have borne fruit and will continue to do so while I draw the breath of life.

"How glad you will be to learn that the trials through which we have passed have had no untoward influence on our family life. On the contrary, they have drawn us more closely together. The King is kinder and more considerate than ever. Often it seems to me as if my lover and bridegroom

had come back. His affection for me is shown in deeds rather than words. But only yesterday he looked at me with those earnest eyes of his and said, 'You dear Louisa, our troubles have made me love and honour you more than ever I did. I could not otherwise have known how much I possess in having you. Let it be as stormy as it likes out of doors so long as there is sunshine in our home. . . .'

"Our children are our treasures. When we look at them, we are filled with satisfaction and hope. The Crown Prince is full of life and intelligence. His talents are being carefully developed and he is true in thought and speech. He is making remarkable progress in history. The records of good and great men appeal strongly to his love of the ideal. He has a keen sense of the ludicrous and his comical remarks are a great diversion to us. He is specially fond of his mother, and it would be impossible for him to be a purer-minded boy than he is. I love him dearly and often talk to him of the time when he will be King.

"Our son William (allow me, worthy grandfather, to present your grandchildren to you in order of age)—our son William, if I am not very much mistaken, will be like his father, upright, plain spoken, sensible. In appearance too he resembles him more than the other children, only I do not think he will be so good-looking. You see, dear father, I am still in love with my husband.

"Our daughter Charlotte is an ever-increasing

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source of joy to me. She is very quiet and reserved ; but, like her father, she has a warm, sympathetic heart under the veil of an undemonstrative manner. Perhaps for this very reason she has already a certain distinction of bearing. If God preserves her to us, I augur for her a splendid future.

"Carl is very good-natured, merry, generous and gifted. He is developing rapidly both physically and mentally. He often says funny things that make us laugh. He asks questions all day long and I am often at my wits' end to answer him. This shows he is eager for information, though sometimes, when I see him smiling slyly, I know the questions are prompted by mere curiosity. Without being indifferent to the joys and sorrows of others, he will yet go easily and light-heartedly along the path of life.

"Our daughter Alexandrina is, like other girls of her age, childlike and clinging. She comprehends things easily, has a lively imagination, and one can often hear her laughing heartily. She is quick to see the comical side of things and can make satirical remarks with a perfectly serious face. At the same time she is never ill-natured. Of the little Louisa there is not much to be said yet. She is like her father though her eyes are not so dark. In other respects besides name may she resemble her ancestress the good and lovable Louisa of Orange, the worthy consort of the Great Elector.

"Now, dear father, I have shown you my whole

picture gallery. You will say, here is a doating mother who sees only the good qualities of her children and shuts her eyes to their faults. In truth I do not see in any of them failings of such a nature as to make us anxious about their future. They have their naughtinesses, like other children, but these will disappear in course of time as they learn wisdom. Events and circumstances have an educative influence, and it may be well for our children that in their youth they have seen something of the graver side of life. . . . Especially beneficial is it for the Crown Prince to become familiar with trouble before he comes to the throne. He will the better know how to prize and guard the happiness which I hope will be his in future days. My devoted care is ever at the service of my children. In my daily prayers I beseech God to bless them and not to take His Holy Spirit from them. My worthy Dr. Hufeland is at one with me in those aspirations. He evinces as much concern for the spiritual as for the physical well-being of my children. I am also helped by our good open-hearted Borowsky, of whom the King is very fond. If God spares our children, He spares us our best treasures and no one can take them from us. Let what will come, we shall be happy in the society of our dear boys and girls.

"I tell you all this, dear father, in order that you may not feel uneasy about us. To your friendly remembrance I commend my husband, and also our children, who kiss the hands of their honoured grand-

father. I am and shall remain, dearest father, your grateful daughter."

The earlier portion of this remarkable letter is convincing evidence that Queen Louisa's life is, from first to last, a record of progress. It shows how far she has travelled from the days of girlhood when she deprecated the necessity of becoming acquainted with the seamy side of things. The days spent in happy intercourse with relatives and friends or in the pursuit of innocent pleasure have likewise been left behind. Even those more recent days, when she could find a certain relief in denouncing her enemies, have passed away. The outbreak of the war with France marks the great turning point of her life. But for a while she seems to be feeling her way rather than advancing rapidly. Far from giving her her death-blow, the days of Tilsit enabled her to go forward by leaps and bounds. She had caught a glimpse of politics on a larger scale than she had hitherto had any conception of. She realised what was meant by the might of Napoleon, and began to ask herself why he proved irresistible since manifestly he lived in a world which, from the moral point of view, was inferior to her own. The culpable apathy and self-sufficiency of the former Prussian Government furnished her with a partial answer to the question. And on the strength of that she dedicated herself unreservedly to the service of her unfortunate country. Gradually, however, the part that Napoleon was playing in history became as

patent to her as to the present-day student of the period. The foregoing letter brings us, as it were, face to face with the Queen in the last stage of her career. We recognise in her a woman of reflective mind and mature character, capable of taking a wide, direct outlook on contemporary events and free from political bias and rancour.

The summer of 1809 was spent by Louisa in her modest country house. Again she was expecting the birth of a child and the return to Berlin was necessarily delayed. In the month of June she was greatly distressed to hear that the pension granted to her former governess, Mademoiselle de Gélieux, had not been paid for some time. "I am in despair, dear Gélieux," writes the Queen, "since I read your last letter to Theresa. She sent it on to me and I received it last evening (8th June, 1809). I shed tears over it. How could I do otherwise at the thought of your goodness and sweetness in the midst of poverty. Although I gave the strictest injunctions that you could receive the money regularly and am therefore innocent in the matter of this delay, you have not suffered any the less dear, greatly honoured friend. It is true that my secretary has gone to Berlin, but still he had my orders. It is scandalous that you should be in want of the necessaries of life, you who devoted the best years of that life to the forming of my character, you who have made it possible that neither in prosperity nor adversity have I lacked the greatest of all blessings—a peaceful

conscience. To think that it did not occur to me to ascertain if my agents were doing their duty by you! I will never forgive myself for my negligence. I crave a million pardons. I am doubly vexed; for indeed, my dear friend, it is impossible for anyone to recognise more clearly than I do all that I owe to you, all that you have done for me. I cannot love you more or regard you with greater respect than I have done and shall do while life lasts. How touching that in spite of this apparent forgetfulness you should make inquiries about my health, and express good wishes for the forthcoming event. It is not due till September, but it will comfort me then to think of your tender remembrance of me.<sup>1</sup>

"Yesterday I wrote to Theresa and begged her to forward the total amount of my debt to you as soon as possible. Thus the money will reach you more quickly than if I order payment from Berlin.

"We are established in a little garden house near Königsberg. Everything is on a small scale but comfortable. . . . For the last three days I have been enjoying one of my greatest pleasures in life, the society of my brother George, the best, most estimable and tenderest of friends. I assure you that this compensates me for a multitude of evils. It is a visible proof that God loves me and watches over me. George undertook the long journey solely to see me again after my many trials. We are inconceivably happy in being together. He sends you

<sup>1</sup>The Queen's youngest child, Prince Albert, was born 4th October, 1809.

affectionate remembrances, and so do I. May Heaven protect you for long years to come. If you have any ungratified wishes, do let me know about them, in token that you have forgiven me and that you love me as much as I love you."

In writing to Mademoiselle de Gélieux, Louisa mentions that she has procured a Swiss governess for her eldest daughter. She does not, however, refer to her growing interest in schemes for the education of the people. In St. Petersburg she visited the home for orphans founded by Catherine II., and a flourishing school for the education of girls of the upper classes which owed its existence to her friend, the Dowager Empress. She set her heart on founding a similar institution in Berlin as soon as she had the means of doing so. She was keenly interested when, in April, 1809, her husband appointed William von Humboldt Minister of Education. He proceeded to introduce into Prussia the system of national education afterwards extended to other parts of Germany. His project of the establishment of a university at Berlin now took definite shape, and a second university was founded at Breslau, the capital of Silesia.

It is impossible to estimate the debt owed by Germany to William von Humboldt. In Prussia his educational reforms stimulated the spirit of patriotism. When the War of Liberation broke out, professors and students hastened to enrol themselves as volunteers.

Books dealing with the subject of education be-

gan to find their way to Hippel's Garden. "I am reading *Leonard and Gertrude*," writes Queen Louisa. "It is a book for the people by Pestalozzi. I seem to feel quite at home in his little Swiss village. If I were my own mistress, I would order my carriage and drive away along the road that leads to Switzerland and Pestalozzi. With a tear in my eye, I would take the noble-hearted man by the hand and express my gratitude to him. With what benevolence does he regard all mankind. Yes, in the name of humanity I thank him! One sentence in the book particularly pleased me, because it is so true: 'Sorrow and suffering are God's blessings when they are past'. Yes, in the midst of my suffering I can say already: It is God's blessing. For I have been brought nearer to God, and instead of mere feelings I have certain convictions about the immortality of the soul."

As there was no immediate prospect of furthering the cause of education in Berlin, Louisa turned her attention to the capital of East Prussia. A pupil of Pestalozzi, Zeller by name, was invited to Königsberg and commissioned to transform the Orphan Home into a model school on the Pestalozzian system. In spite of indifferent health, the Queen visited the institution and did what she could to encourage the teachers and pupils, and she often invited Zeller to confer with her at the Huben. "Religion and morality, these must be the foundation stones of life," was one of her favourite maxims.

Meanwhile she was noting with undiminished interest the course of events in Europe, and reperusing the works of Schiller. In the family circle his *History of the Thirty Years' War* was read aloud. The Queen also studied his *Revolt of the Netherlands*. Her early visit to Holland helped her to understand the descriptive passages of her favourite writer. In the light of events in Spain and the Tyrol new meaning could be found in lines of *William Tell*. "On the mountains is freedom," she quotes. "Does not this saying, which for the first time I fully comprehend, sound like a prophecy, when one looks up to the heights where patriots respond to the call of Hofer?" What a wonderful man is this Andreas Hofer! A peasant becomes a military commander, and how remarkable a commander. His weapon—prayer; his ally—God. He wrestles with folded hands, on bent knees, and then fights as if he possessed the fiery sword of God's angel. Think too of the devoted Swiss mountaineers to whom my heart goes out since I began to read Pestalozzi. With a childlike trustfulness of nature they can yet fight like the Titans who are said to break off fragments from the mountains and hurl them about. Similar patriotism is being manifested in Spain. Would to God that the days of Joan of Arc could come back once more and that our foe, our cruel foe, might be overcome by the same supernatural power which enabled the French, when led by the Maid, to drive their hereditary enemy out of their

country! Ah, how I read and re-read my Schiller! Why would he never consent to come to Berlin? Why did he die? Would the author of *William Tell* have been dazzled by Napoleon like Müller who wrote the prose history of the Swiss Confederation? No! no! Listen only to this saying, 'Worthy of contempt is the nation which will not risk everything for the sake of honour'. Surely this is not written by a traitor. Wherefore did I ask why Schiller died? In these days God takes to Himself the people He loves best!"

No Tyrolean patriot was more sincerely grieved than Queen Louisa when, in spite of all his promises, the Emperor Francis signed a treaty which again surrendered the Tyrol to Napoleon. French and Bavarian soldiers poured into the passes of the hills and the brave mountaineers were forced to lay down their arms. The price put on Hofer's head induced a priest whom he trusted to betray his hiding-place. He was taken prisoner and marched off to Mantua, where he was executed after a mock trial.

The news from Spain was likewise disquieting. The French had defeated the army of the patriots and regained the upper hand. But though beaten, the Spaniards were far from being subdued. It became necessary to reinforce the French army. Further detachments of French soldiers were withdrawn from Prussia. At last it seemed that the long-delayed evacuation of the country was within

sight. A further source of relief to the Prussian Government was the fact that, since the outbreak of hostilities with Austria, Napoleon had ceased to press for money. As the year 1809 drew to a close there seemed to be no reason why the royal family should not keep Christmas in Berlin.

"Dear Berlin, when shall I see it again?" asks Queen Louisa in one of her letters from Russia. Sometimes she adapted Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meister* to express her longing for her good city:—

Ginge es doch nach Berlin!  
Dahin, dahin möcht ich jetzt ziehn.

When the day of departure from Königsberg is fixed Louisa tells her brother that "It is a long time since I took up my pen to write to you feeling so happy as I do now. I am overjoyed that I can inform you of our approaching return to Berlin. But, can you imagine it, my dearly loved George, in the midst of my unspeakable delight at the thought of being in Berlin and re-united with nearly all the members of my family, I yet have a feeling of oppression at my heart, a foreboding of some evil to befall us either before or after the happy moment to which we look forward?" Elsewhere she says, "I cannot get rid of these gloomy forebodings".

Nothing occurred to interfere with the preparations for departure. On 15th December, 1809,

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Louisa looked her last at the city and castle of Königsberg. It was the sixteenth anniversary of the day when she had taken leave of her home at Darmstadt to set out on another memorable journey to the Prussian capital.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RETURN OF THE ROYAL FAMILY TO BERLIN. THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO MECKLENBURG. HER ILLNESS AND DEATH

THE King and Queen travelled westward amidst demonstrations of heartfelt pleasure at their return. As they drove into Stargard on 21st December the King espied an elderly but vigorous man in the uniform of a Prussian admiral standing on a flight of steps. "Surely that is Nettelbeck," said Frederick William to his wife, remembering that in return for his services at Colberg the old sea captain had been raised to the rank of an admiral. The conjecture proved to be true. At a reception held during the evening the admiral reappeared. He was warmly greeted by their Majesties and requested to wait till they were at liberty to speak with him. When the other guests had departed, Nettelbeck had an interview all to himself. He told how he had travelled through the night from Colberg in order to see his King and Queen face to face. They questioned him about the famous siege, and were as much moved by the old sailor's narrative of heroic

deeds as he was by their kindly interest in him and his townspeople. This day spent at Stargard also afforded General Blücher an opportunity of meeting their Majesties.

The last pause for the night was made at Freinwalde on the Oder. This had been the country residence of the King's mother during her widowhood, and the travellers felt themselves to be on familiar ground once more. The following day dawned clear and sunny, and the last posting station was soon reached. Here refreshments had been prepared and a deputation was waiting to welcome their Majesties in the name of the citizens of Berlin. They presented to the Queen the people's gift of a magnificent state carriage upholstered in velvet of a lavender shade, with silver-plated harness for eight horses. In this she made her second public entry into the metropolis amidst the firing of salutes and the joyous pealing of the bells. The King preceded her on horseback. Her two eldest sons marched with the officers of the Guards. With her in the carriage were her daughter Charlotte, her son Carl and her niece Frederica, daughter of the Frederica who had been beside her on the occasion of her first entry. Opposite to her, as on that memorable day, sat Countess Voss. This tried companion of all her wanderings was now a hale old lady of eighty. Many were struck by the contrast between her vigorous age and the fragile appearance of the Queen who was nearly half a century her junior.

Amongst the cheering crowds were many who could recall Her Majesty's arrival sixteen years before as the bride of the Crown Prince, in all the strength of her youth and freshness of her beauty. Of her, as of the young Marie Antoinette, it might then have been said, "Surely there never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision". In the years which followed "a thousand ties to reverence closed in her as mother, wife and Queen". As *Queen* especially she was reverenced on her return. Her eyes had lost their former brilliancy. "One could see that they were eyes that had shed many tears. Her lovely complexion had faded, but the pale face was still beautiful. Gone was the smile which formerly played about her mouth. From time to time there was a slight piteous trembling of her lips."<sup>1</sup> The years of sorrow and exile had left their mark. But, as was finely said by Heinrich von Kleist in the poem presented to Louisa on her thirty-fourth birthday, 10th March, 1810, it was hardly possible to regard as wholly evil experiences which had revealed the true greatness of her character.

O Herrscherin, die Zeit dann möcht 'ich segnen !  
Wir sahn Dich, Anmuth endlos niederregnen,  
Wie gross Du warst, das ahndeten wir nicht.

Yes, the people were beginning to understand how she had laboured and suffered on their behalf. It

<sup>1</sup> Borowsky.

was not by accident that Glück's *Iphigenia* had been selected for the first state performance at the Opera House.

While fully appreciating the tokens of goodwill received by her in East Prussia, Louisa had never hesitated to admit that she had been "homesick for Berlin". When she saw her father awaiting her in the doorway of the palace, she knew that she had indeed come home.

To the Russian Empress the Queen wrote: "Our entry was a very touching experience. The people received us with the utmost joy. We could feel that they welcomed us with all their hearts. The King has never been more popular. We see only friendly faces everywhere. God be thanked that we are again in Berlin. Whatever we may still have to endure will be more easily endured here. The city presented me with a most beautiful carriage. The gift has a special value coming as it does at a time of terrible anxiety in consequence of the exorbitant demands of the French."

Louisa's forebodings of misfortunes still to come had speedily been justified. Over Queen and country there had fallen once more the shadow of Napoleon. While the Austrians were actively opposed to him, he had, as already mentioned, deemed it politic not to press the Prussian Government for money. But no sooner was he released from the apprehension of further hostility on the part of Francis I., than he claimed an immediate instal-

ment of the indemnity, in accordance with the terms of the fatal convention, together with payment in full of the arrears.

The Prussian authorities were at their wits' end ; for it was manifestly impossible to comply with the demand. The place left vacant when Stein was driven into exile had not been bestowed on any single minister. His offices had perforce been divided amongst men not likely to resist the will of the tyrant. Altenstein, the Minister of Finance, was a man of no power and no resource. The Queen interviewed the French ambassador. He referred her to Napoleon. To him she wrote assuring him that the debt would ultimately be paid, but begging him to be satisfied with a payment of interest in the meantime. Her appeal had no result. Matters came to a crisis on her birthday, 10th March, 1810. In the course of the evening Altenstein informed her that Napoleon proposed to annex Silesia in lieu of payment, and that he had advised the King to settle the claim in this way. Queen Louisa vehemently opposed the suggestion. Before the evening was over she contrived to enlist on her side the Lord Chamberlain Wittgenstein—a man of considerable influence with the King. They managed to convince Frederick William that nothing would be gained by parting with the cherished possession of Frederick the Great. But it was a more difficult matter to induce Napoleon to renounce his intention of appropriating it. Letters had to be written to the

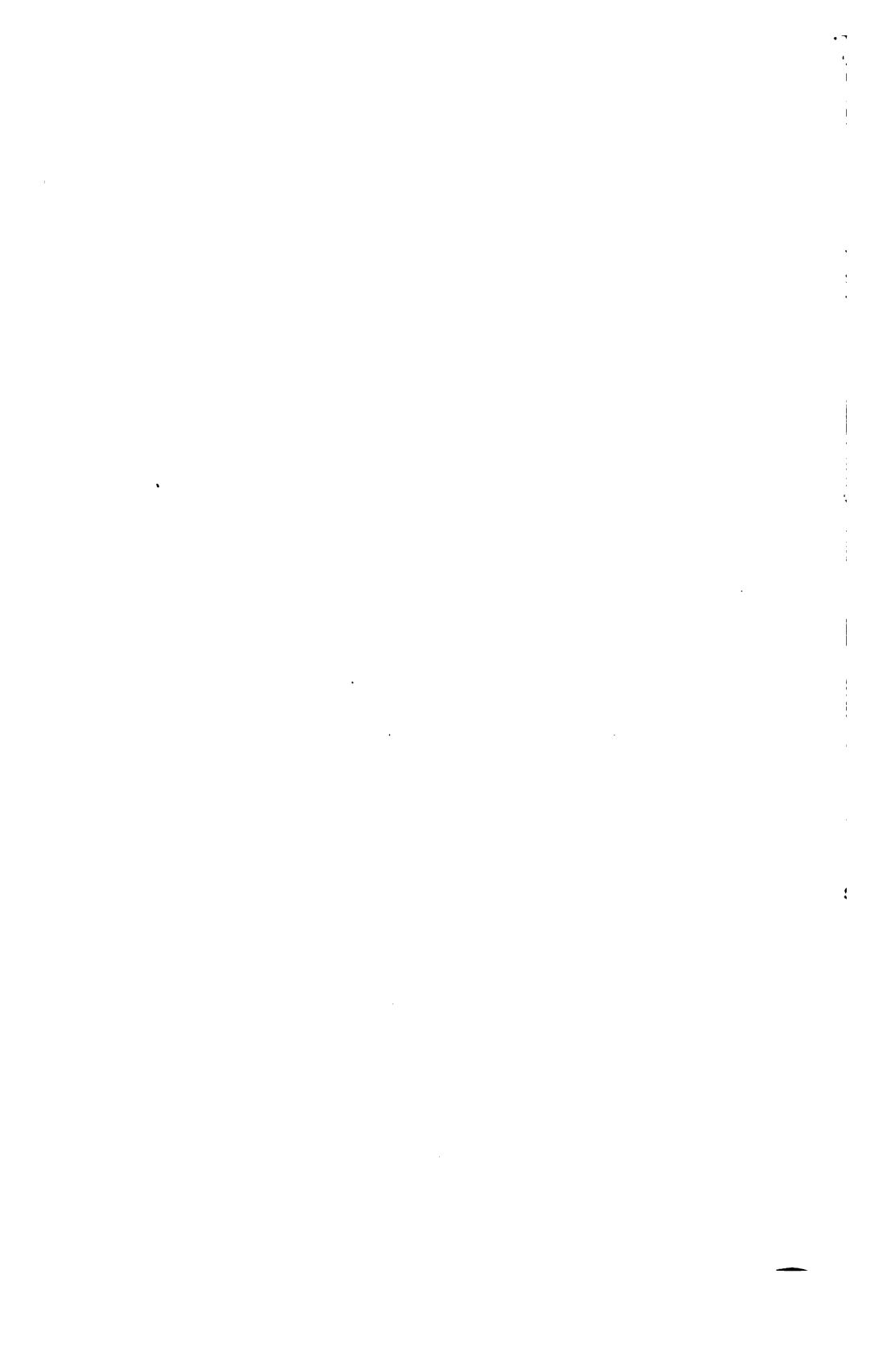
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Czar, to the Emperor Francis, to every one who could bring any influence to bear upon the despot at Paris. Louisa was forced to postpone a visit to her father to which she had been looking forward. "Circumstances," she says, "make it quite impossible for me to forsake the post to which God has summoned me. Napoleon is quite mad in the demands he is making. I cannot, dare not leave the King at this crisis. He is perfectly wretched and needs the presence of a faithful friend in whom he may confide. My whole life seems to be one long series of sacrifices; and the outlook is very black."

Fortunately the Queen's birthday brought her a message from Hardenberg and the assurance that, if he could thereby serve the country, he was ready to disregard Napoleon's unreasonable requirement that he should not approach within fifty miles of the Prussian court. Louisa promptly arranged a meeting between him and her ally Prince Wittgenstein. This led on to a yet more important secret meeting between Hardenberg and the King and Queen. Finally in the month of May, Napoleon stated that, in deference to the wishes of the Russian and Austrian Governments, he withdrew his demand for Silesia. Further representations inclined him to believe that the money urgently needed by him for the continuance of the war with Spain might be more quickly raised if the Prussian Minister of Finance were less of a nonentity, and he intimated that no further objection would be made to the

King's proposal to recall Hardenberg. This announcement, says Queen Louisa, made her "inexpressibly happy," and the day of her country's deliverance was certainly brought nearer by this, her final, intervention in affairs of state.

Recent events in Austria had made her feel how great was the privilege of patriotic Prussians in being free to continue working for the enfranchisement of their fatherland. In Southern Germany all such efforts had been brought to a standstill when Napoleon became the son-in-law of the Emperor Francis. In obtaining a divorce from Josephine, his original idea was, as has been said, to ally himself with the Russian imperial family. When he was given to understand that the Czar did not covet, even for his younger sister Anna, the position of Empress of the French, Napoleon immediately determined to wed the Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria. To her father the thought of such a union was naturally repugnant, but he dared not take the risk of withholding his consent. Queen Louisa was full of compassion for the monarch who had been forced to choose between his daughter and the dismemberment of his country. As she realised that, in concluding the marriage, Napoleon had followed the line of least resistance, her thoughts flew back to the first sorrow of her wedded life—her grief over the stillborn daughter who, had all gone well, would have been the eldest of her family and of marriageable age in 1810. "I thank God now,"





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she said, "that the child did not live. We are spared the worst, for Prussia is more entirely in Napoleon's power than Austria."

On 4th June, Hardenberg's appointment to the office of Chancellor was formally announced. As the heavy burden of responsibility fell from Louisa's shoulders, her buoyant nature reasserted itself. She plunged eagerly into preparations for the long-deferred visit to Mecklenburg. From Sans Souci, on 20th June, she wrote the following letter to her sister Frederica and her brothers George and Charles :—

"Just a word to you, my dear ones, to express the joy which fills my whole heart. I am coming to you on Monday afternoon, 25th June, between four and five o'clock, and I can stay in Neu Strelitz until Thursday evening. Then the good King, who is making this pleasure possible for me, will appear in person and stay till the Monday following. Then, alas, I shall have to take leave of you again. As I mentioned to papa, the King wishes to spend the time of his visit at Hohen Zieritz. He has a perfect passion for the place and prefers it to the formality of the town. I am sure that papa will have no objections. It would have been very difficult, not to say impossible, to get the King to consent to come if his destination were Neu Strelitz. But he says, 'I am quite willing to spend a few days at Hohen Zieritz'. I am therefore taking for granted that we shall drive on there as soon as he arrives. When

I think of being with you for eight whole days in Mecklenburg, especially when I think of seeing my good grandmamma, I feel so uplifted that I get quite frightened about it. Positively I have to *skimp* myself in the matter of happiness, because so often when I have indulged in delightsome expectations, everything has gone awry. Of late this has happened with terrible frequency.

"I can fancy Martin,<sup>1</sup> with his leather apron and measuring rod, rushing about the castle or riding post haste to Hohen Zieritz. But at last he will say, 'I can put them all up'. You, Frederica, and you, George, must be having a lively time over the preparations. I seem to hear you saying all day long: 'What about this, George?' or 'Now listen to me, Frederica'.

"I will manage the journey at one stretch. Boto<sup>2</sup> will be with me in the carriage. When we have travelled some distance and she gets tired, I always fancy I have a cardboard figure sitting beside me; for, as the carriage jolts, she lets herself be jerked from side to side as if she were an inanimate object.

"I beg you let this visit be quite unceremonious. Prohibit all formal calls on the part of the nobility and everything that makes for restraint. For decency's sake, I suppose I must hold a reception

<sup>1</sup> The castellan at Neu Strelitz.

<sup>2</sup> Countess Voss.

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on one of the days ; but just as papa wishes. I will travel with my own horses. But do you, Frederica, lend me Quint<sup>1</sup> while I am with you. To economise space I shall bring no such piece of baggage. Little Quint has known me since the Königsberg days. Huzza. Tra-la-la. I will soon be among you. The faithful Berg is coming too, I hope. Do not forget the junket and some strawberries for the King's tea. If in your frigid zone the strawberries are not yet ripe, please do not mention this request to papa, or he will worry about it . . . I am mad with joy. I have so much to tell you. The dear old lady,<sup>2</sup> would that I had money enough to take her and Frederica to Carlsbad. But I am poor as a church mouse. If only I had that half million of francs which were spent on fitting up a room for Marie Louise at Compiègne! Do you know, you three, that the Empress of France is called Marie Louise?

" Humboldt is going to Vienna and has become his Excellency. There has been no promotion for me save to the happiness of seeing you again. Hallelujah. It is warm and breezy and the inside of my head is like a peep-show. All the windows illuminated and hung with yellow, red and blue curtains!! Huzza, dear comrades, adieu. Now I must write sensibly to grandmamma."

<sup>1</sup> Attendant of Princess Solms.

<sup>2</sup> Her grandmother.

*22nd June.*

"Not to delay my letter I will just say that yours are simply heavenly. I am in Charlottenburg and very glad that Monday will soon be here. We will bring no doctor with us. If I break my neck, Hieronymi<sup>1</sup> must just glue my head on again."

On 25th June, Queen Louisa set out from Charlottenburg in such excellent spirits that Countess Voss was surprised to see a look of sadness stealing over her features as they drew near the Prussian frontier. Her agitation increased. She seemed strangely reluctant to cross the boundary line between the territory of her husband and that of her father. But all traces of depression vanished when the Queen reached the inn where refreshments had been provided for her and suddenly found herself surrounded by her father, brother, step-brother, and her sister Frederica. They had hurried forward to meet her and escort her to the capital of the duchy.

In the land of her fathers Louisa was almost a stranger, but it gave her a very homelike feeling to behold her grandmother from Darmstadt waiting to welcome her at the ducal residence. Three days later King Frederick William joined the happy family gathering. Great was the Queen's pleasure at being able to receive her husband in the ancestral castle. She went with him through the various apartments pointing out this and that object of in-

<sup>1</sup> Medical attendant of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

terest, and named to him the people to whom it behoved him to speak. When left alone for a few minutes, she seized a pen and wrote :—

" My dear father, I am very happy to-day as your daughter and the wife of the best of husbands.—Louisa. Neu Strelitz, 28th June, 1810."

This note was not discovered until events had made it a message of consolation to two sorrowing hearts.

In the evening of the same day, the Duke and his guests drove to his country seat of Hohen Zieritz. The Queen had apparently taken cold, but she looked upon it as a passing ailment and joined the circle of her relatives next day. But feverish symptoms supervened and she was obliged to keep her room. Hufeland, her regular physician, had unfortunately received leave of absence and gone to Holland. It was needful, as she had playfully anticipated, to have recourse to her father's medical adviser. He advocated bleeding and reduced her strength without corresponding benefit. Still, there was no appearance of anything more serious than a mild attack of fever. The weather had become extremely hot. And Her Majesty was not the only sufferer in the household.

The King delayed his return as long as possible, and then set out for Berlin promising to be back in a week. He had scarcely arrived when he too was prostrated by fever. The bulletins from Hohen Zieritz reported his wife's continued illness, but did not give rise to uneasiness. Louisa herself sent

messages begging her husband not to risk another journey immediately. To satisfy his mind, he sent the famous Berlin physician, Heim, to report on the case. Heim returned in a few days and announced that the Queen was suffering from inflammation of the lungs, but that the illness was following a natural course. He proposed to return to Mecklenburg when the crisis might be expected. The King apparently decided to go at the same time.

In attendance on the suffering Queen were the close companions of her earlier and later life, her sister Frederica, Frau von Berg and the faithful Countess Voss. In her diary the latter records her growing anxiety about her beloved mistress, but it was not until 17th July that Heim received an urgent summons to return to Hohen Zieritz. He found the Queen exhausted by difficulty of breathing and severe attacks of pain in the chest. By the following day her symptoms were so alarming that a messenger was sent to request the King to come as soon as possible. Through the slow hours of the ensuing night the watchers in the sick room listened for the sound of his chariot wheels and dreaded lest he should come too late. At dawn the end seemed near, and the Queen's father was summoned. She rallied slightly, but he remained beside her, from time to time murmuring sadly, "Lord, Thy ways are not our ways". About sunrise the King was seen hastening towards the residence on foot, his two elder boys trying to keep pace with his long strides. Fearing to

disturb the sufferer, he had left his carriage at some distance from the gateway.

To him the journey through the night had seemed endless. "At last," he says, "I saw in the distance the high gable of the residence. Above it hung heavy clouds, dark with coming rain. They seemed to me a presage of impending woe. I did not distrust God's power, but I felt that I must be prepared for the worst. It was a quarter to five in the morning when I arrived. There was consternation on every face. Dr. Heim came and said my wife wished to speak to me. I therefore went immediately to her room. I was dismayed to see how her appearance had changed as a result of the constant spasmodic attacks and other causes of suffering. She was very weak and had been in pain since midnight.

"As soon as she became aware of my presence, her features expressed the liveliest satisfaction. 'Dear one,' she said, 'how glad I am to see you. How good it is to have you here again.' Then she added, 'It is better for us to be together. It is a comfort to us both.' She kissed me several times, drawing me close to her breast. For some time afterwards, and at intervals until the end, she raised her hands to her lips, kissed them and put them into mine. The holding of her hands seemed to soothe her. The doctors, Princess Solms, Frau von Berg, and others had been constantly requested to hold her hands. She asked me if I had come in the new

coach. I said 'No, in the usual open carriage'. She was quite concerned, and said, 'You travelled thus during the night after your attack of fever'. I said I was sorry I could not do more for her. She answered, 'It is enough that you are here'.

"All this time the spasms of pain in the chest continued. Her respiration was difficult. Sometimes there was a convulsive catching of the breath, but generally it came with a moaning sound. Yet her voice was clear as from time to time she cried 'Air, more air'.

"When I told her that Fritz and William had come, she again looked pleased and demanded to see them immediately. When they appeared she said, 'How glad I am to see you, my dear Fritz'. And then she repeated the same words to William. . . . It was suggested that she might get some rest if left alone with her attendants, so I went to my room. Very soon Heim came and gave me details of the illness, remarking that although there was a possibility there was little likelihood of improvement. She had asked him and the other doctors if she were in danger. They had then thought it best to reassure her. Now, however, there was imminent danger, and Heim thought it might be well if I were to see her alone, confirm what the doctors had said, but add that no one could accurately foretell the issue of a severe illness, and ask if she had any wishes to express. A quarter of an hour later, I went to her and found her slightly easier. . . . I knelt beside her bed,

kissed her hand and said, 'I do not think it can be God's will to part us. You are my one source of happiness. Apart from you, life has no attraction for me. You are the only friend I have, the only being whom I can trust without reserve.' 'You have Hardenberg,' she interposed; but I continued, 'If it is not God's will to restore you, I pray that He may take me too'. I asked if she had any wish to express, and she said 'No'; if there were anything she was anxious about, she said, 'Your happiness and the upbringing of the children'.

"It was not possible for me to speak thus without sometimes showing what I felt, and though I had been as careful as I could, she became excited and uneasy, and said, 'Now do not give way or pity me, or I shall certainly die'. But it was on this occasion that she kissed me for the last time, and pressed my hand lovingly when I said I hoped she was not vexed with me.

"The spasms of pain were not equally severe, but the feeling of oppression was constant. She dreaded each fresh attack, and often repeated, 'I am suffering terribly. Air, more air.' To Heim she used almost the same words as she had done to me. 'The King is very good, but there must be no giving way or I know I shall die.' He tried to calm her, and she turned to me and said, 'Do not be afraid, I am not going to die'. But the deathly pallor, the moisture on her brow, and all the alarming symptoms were on the increase. Her fingers became icy cold

and had to be constantly rubbed with hot towels. Like everyone else I did my best, sometimes trying to warm her hands with my breath. The left one I held in mine until the end came. All endeavours to relieve her were in vain. Her head moved about restlessly. When told that it might relieve her to raise her arms, she replied, 'It would kill me. I am dying from the head downwards. Lord Jesus, forsake me not!' And at the last when the terrible spasms had nearly choked her breath, she exclaimed, 'Lord Jesus, shorten this'. A few convulsive movements followed and then she was gone, and I closed the poor sightless eyes.

"The meaning of God's mysterious dispensations is not to be fathomed by man. As far as possible he must endure with Christian resignation. Her sufferings ended at nine o'clock. At a quarter to eleven came Charlotte and Carl. But they could only kneel by the lifeless body and weep for the death of the dearest of mothers. She died the death of the righteous. God grant her eternal happiness. It is we who are to be compassionated. Time may allay my grief, but it can never pass away."<sup>1</sup>

"God's ways," says Countess Voss, "are unsearchable and holy, but often they are very terrible. The King, his children, the State, the Court, everybody

<sup>1</sup> This touching record was published in the *Hohenzollern Jahrbuch* for 1902. It was written on the day of the Queen's death, 19th July, 1810.





THE TOMBS OF QUEEN LOUISA AND FREDERICK WILLIAM III AT CHARLOTTENBURG

in fact, has lost everything in losing her. I do not speak of myself, but my grief is very great."

By the way that Queen Louisa had travelled less than a month before, over the frontier she had hesitated to cross, along the sandy roads of Brandenburg, shadowed by dark pine trees, past groups of sorrow-stricken country folk, she was borne onwards till, passing through the Brandenburg gate, she made her last entry into Berlin. The funeral over, she was left in a temporary resting place in the cathedral. A few months later the coffin was transferred to a mausoleum erected by the King in the grounds of his palace at Charlottenburg. The lovely recumbent figure on the tomb is the work of the Queen's favourite sculptor, Rauch, who had often portrayed her in her lifetime. Sleep, not death, is suggested by her aspect. From the upper part of the building the subdued light streams down on "a perfect form in perfect rest" with the Prussian eagle at her feet.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### QUEEN LOUISA AND THE GERMAN FATHERLAND

Was vergangen, kehrt nicht wieder,  
Aber ging es leuchtend nieder,  
Leuchtet's lange noch zurück.

—GOETHE.

TO her husband's subjects the passing of Queen Louisa brought a keen sense of personal bereavement. A volume might easily be filled with glowing tributes to her memory and expressions of regret for the withdrawal of her beneficent influence. William von Humboldt may, however, be regarded as the spokesman of his fellow-citizens and of the party of reform when he maintains that the day when the Queen's coffin was borne into the capital in solemn procession was one of the saddest of his life. "Her death," he says, "is nothing short of a public calamity. It affects not only Prussia, but, to some extent, the whole of Germany. It fills up the measure of our national misfortune and leaves a void that no one can fill. Her Majesty possessed in a superlative degree the power of putting new life into others, of reassuring, animating, encouraging. At critical moments she could look round and single out the

## LOUISA AND THE FATHERLAND 303

men of ability who were needed by the State, even if they made no effort to attract her attention. In justice to her it must be stated that, with all her frankness and sweetness and disinclination to interfere in public affairs, she yet knew how to render valuable services to the State and to give a right direction to the course of events. All this wondrous power has passed away with her. Only a few weeks ago she was showing her interest in me and in my career.<sup>1</sup> As fate would have it, I shall never have the satisfaction of thanking her. In the midst of this affliction the King has manifested deep feeling together with admirable self-control."

Away in the lost provinces of Prussia lamentation was made for the Queen who had striven to win them back from the enemy. In Halle, it is said, "the whole city gave way to grief. Never did the inhabitants appear in a more attractive light. They were moved as they had never been since the days when first they were made aware of their complete subjection to France. There was sorrow on every countenance, mourning in every household. There was also a general belief that the last faint glimmer of hope for the future had vanished with the adored princess."<sup>2</sup>

It is certainly true that, for one Prussian who knew how many eminent men were engaged in the

<sup>1</sup> See in Queen Louisa's letter of 20th June the reference to Humboldt's appointment as ambassador to the court of Vienna.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Steffens, *Was Ich Erlebte*.

unobtrusive launching of great schemes of reform, there were numbers whose sole hope of better things had come to be associated with the much-loved *Königin Luise*. Amongst those who set themselves to bring solace and renewed confidence to their fellow-mourners was Jean Paul Richter. In the following parable he enumerates the widening circles of the Queen's life and suggests a reply to the inquiry, "What was the real significance of that life to the people of Prussia?"

"Or ever she had seen the light of day her genius stood up and questioned Fate. 'I have many wreaths at my disposal,' he said, 'the flower garland of beauty, the myrtle wreath of marriage, the crown of a kingdom, the oak and laurel wreath of the German Fatherland's love, and—a crown of thorns. Which of these shall I give the child?' 'Give her every one of thy wreaths and crowns,' answered Fate. 'But there remains a diadem that is worth them all.' On the day when a coronet of flowers was wreathed about the forehead of the dead Queen, the genius again appeared. This time he questioned only by his tears, yet an answering voice said, 'Look up'. And, looking up, he beheld the vision of Christ in glory."

"Where there is no vision the people perish." But, in Prussia, the influence of the Queen had proved a very effectual check to that blunting of the national conscience which had its origin in the deterioration of the tone-giving classes. The toiling multitudes,

still good at heart, were attracted by her sympathetic attitude when first she came among them. Her many little nameless acts of kindness and of love were not wholly unremembered. Save in the lives of reigning sovereigns, such as Queen Victoria, there is no parallel to the mutual understanding which grew up between the consort of Frederick William III. and the people of Prussia. They looked to her, and their belief in the old-time ideal of German family life reasserted itself. For "the fierce light which beats upon a throne" revealed in her nothing but what was pure and lovely and of good report. The religion which had contributed so much to the building up of her character did not need special commendation. It was manifestly no fair-weather anchorage, but a haven of refuge amidst a very sea of troubles. And it was not to be dissociated from her patriotism. "God," said Napoleon, "is on the side of the big battalions." "God," said Queen Louisa, with equal conviction, "is on the side of the righteous nation." When we consider that she was largely instrumental in raising the perishing people to a level where they could once more see and be influenced by the vision of self-sacrifice even to the laying down of life for a great cause, it becomes evident that the question of her political status is of secondary importance. It is impossible to read her already quoted "confession of faith" and doubt that she had many of the essential qualifications of a politician. Everything seems to indicate that, had

she lived longer, she would have risen superior to the impulsiveness and romanticism which occasionally led her into errors of judgment.

Her trust in Hardenberg was fully justified. As a civil reformer he was second only to Stein. As chief minister he gave cordial support to all who were labouring for the restoration of Prussia. The reward of the patriots came at last. In 1812 Napoleon quarrelled with the Czar and invaded Russia. His disastrous retreat from Moscow precipitated the revolt of the Germanic states from his authority. Prussia was the first to take action. Napoleon had insisted on including twenty thousand Prussian troops in his army of invasion. Through being appointed to take part in the siege of Riga, they were spared the horrors of the retreat. When their commander, General Yorck, heard of the failure of the expedition, he yielded to the petitions of his officers and, with his whole company, went over to the side of the Czar. The news of this bold step was received with such acclamation in Prussia that the King had no option in the matter of going to war with France. Berlin being still to some extent under the supervision of the enemy, Frederick William betook himself to Breslau, the capital of Silesia. There, in the month of February, 1813, he issued a proclamation calling upon the youth of Prussia to take up arms in defence of their country. He also contrived a meeting with the Russian Emperor, and they entered into a fresh alliance against the enemy.

of Europe. Later in the year they were joined by the Emperor of Austria and the rulers of the other Germanic states. As Queen Louisa had hoped, Germans of every name came to recognise that, in spite of political divisions, they had a common Fatherland. One of the most potent factors in bringing about this acknowledgment of kinship was the publication of the lyrics of Arndt, Körner and other patriotic poets. Verse after verse of Arndt's most famous song begins with the question, "What is the German's Fatherland?" The outbreak of the War of Liberation showed that multitudes were ready to echo the poet's own reply, "His Fatherland includes every region where the German tongue is spoken".

In these utterances of fervent patriotism one name is constantly recurring—the name of Queen Louisa. This commended them to the men and women all over the country to whom the following words might have been applied: "In Halle the first stunned feeling of grief for the death of the Queen was followed by passionate resentment of the presence of the enemy who, the citizens declared, had killed the Guardian Angel of the people. Unspoken but none the less sincere were the vows taken to seize the first opportunity of throwing off the detested yoke. In death, as in life, she was the heroine of the struggle."<sup>1</sup>

The outburst of popular enthusiasm in Austria at the time of the campaign of Wagram found ex-

<sup>1</sup> Steffens, *Was Ich Erlebte*.

pression in Haydn's "Hymn to the Emperor". In like manner the war which ended in Napoleon's banishment to Elba was commemorated in Germany by Körner's "Hymn to Queen Louisa". The following is an English version of the first three stanzas :—

Oh, Saint in bliss, hear thou thy children's prayer,  
 To thee we turn for help as in the past ;  
 Again canst thou look down with joy and share  
 The nation's life. Thy tears are dried at last.  
 For Prussia's sons have risen to a man ;  
 And Prussia's eagle leadeth on the van ;  
 Our choice is made, no falterer shalt thou see,  
 If not in life, in death we will be free.

Fetters of abject shame still girt us round  
 When came to thee the call to go up higher ;  
 To an unworthy age thou hadst been bound ;  
 Thee to avenge became our fixed desire.  
 Thus did thy dying glance our courage wake ;  
 Now, look on us, grown valiant for thy sake ;  
 Let present zeal for weakness past atone,  
 Say, once again, "This people is my own".

In days of old, when righteous war was waged,  
 A pictured saint seemed hovering in mid air,  
 Guarding the standard where the battle raged ;  
 He feared no foe who saw that vision fair.  
 Thus shall our banners in thy keeping be,  
 And thou wilt lead through night to victory.  
 Louisa, the protectress of our right,  
 Louisa, still our watchword in the fight.

It is a significant fact that Körner, who wrote with such enthusiasm of the Prussian Queen, was himself a native of Saxony. But he saw her, as it were,

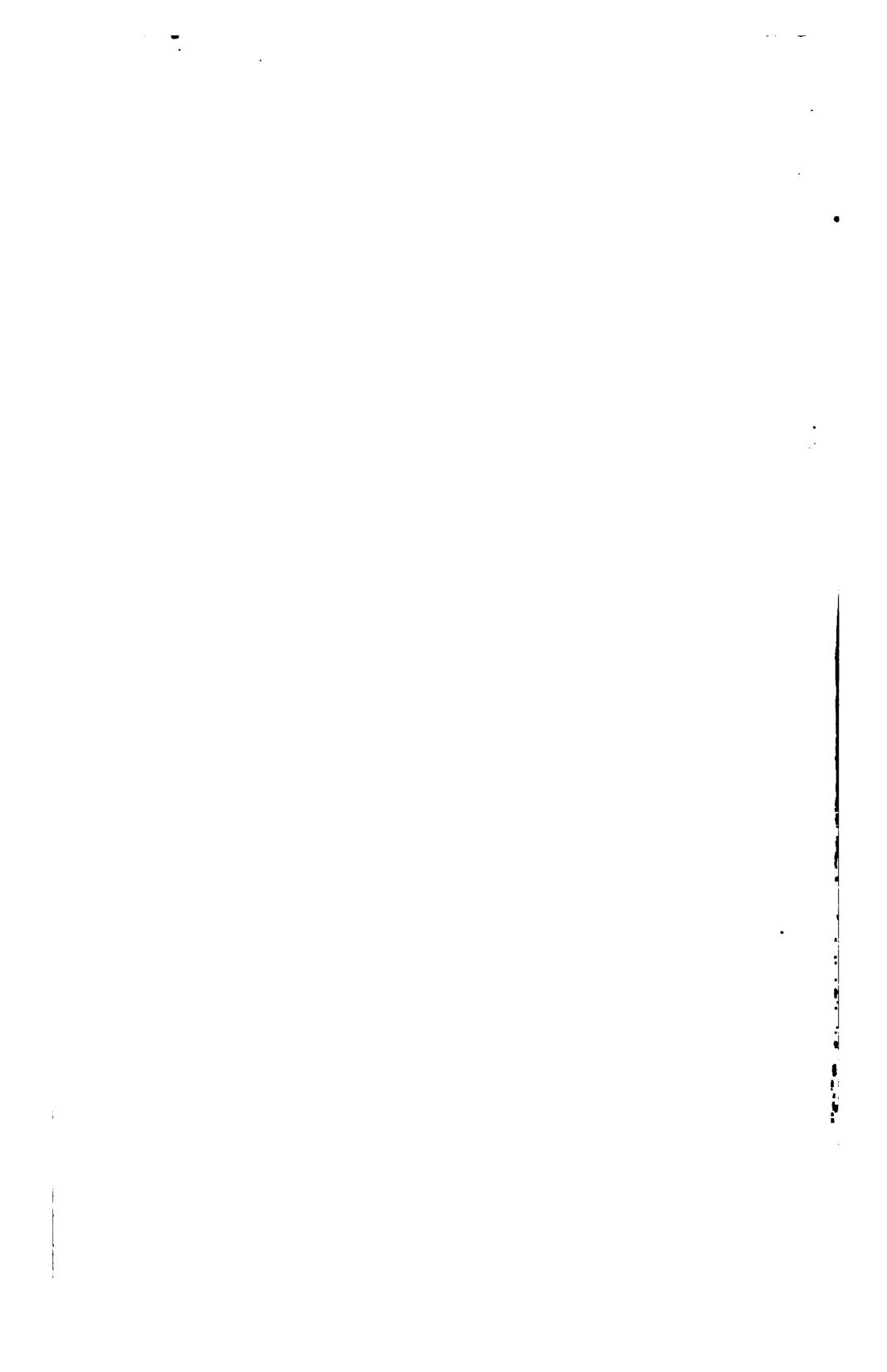


MONUMENT TO QUEEN LOUISA IN THE THIERSGARTEN, BERLIN



## **LOUISA AND THE FATHERLAND 809**

crowned with "the oak and laurel wreath of the German Fatherland's love". In another poem he calls on her to awake from sleep when the day of vengeance and freedom should dawn. It is touching but not surprising to read La Motte Fouqué's narrative of the time when he joined the German army of liberation, and discovered amongst the soldiers a widespread disbelief in the death of Queen Louisa. They had persuaded themselves that some mysterious purpose had been served by the announcement of 19th July, 1810. But, with the breaking of a nobler day, they were plainly expecting her reappearance at any moment. Who shall say that they were wholly wrong? The reward of those who overcome "by love and faith and ministry and patience," has been likened to the morning star, the symbol of fresh opportunities of service. And to Queen Louisa there had been given the morning star of modern Germany.



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## APPENDIX IV

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONCERNING THE LIFE OF QUEEN LOUISA

#### (a) DIRECT

F. ADAMI. *Luise Königin von Preussen*. The nucleus of this book was a brief record of Queen Louisa's later life by Frau von Berg, published in 1814.

GEORG HORN. *Das Buch von der Königin Luise*. Contains interesting letters not included in Adami's biography.

ALWYN LONKE. *Königin Luise*. The best recent biography of the Queen.

*Deutsche Rundschau*. The following series of letters edited by Dr. Paul Baillieu, keeper of the Archives at Berlin, have appeared in this magazine. March, 1896 : "Letters of Queen Louisa to Countess Voss". December, 1900 : "Letters of Queen Louisa to her Brother George". January and February, 1902 : "The Negotiations at Tilsit, as described in the Correspondence of Frederick William the Third and Queen Louisa".

*Hohenzollern Jahrbuch*. In this periodical have appeared the following articles on Queen Louisa by Dr. Paul Baillieu :—  
Volume for 1897 : "Aus der Brautzeit der Königin".

„ „ 1898 : "Königin Luise in Pyrmont".

„ „ 1899 : "Königin Luise in Tilsit".

„ „ 1901 : "Königin Luise als Braut".

„ „ 1902 : "Letzten Tage der Königin Luise".

*Publicationen aus den Königlichen Preussischen Staats-archiven*.  
Volume 75 contains the correspondence of Frederick William

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III. and Queen Louisa with the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia, edited by Dr. Paul Bailieu.

*Deutsche Revue.* In the numbers for January and February, 1905, appeared "Briefe der Königin Luise an ihre Erzieherin," edited by Dr. B. Krieger, Royal Librarian at Berlin.

SOPHIE COUNTESS VOSS. *Neunundsechzig Jahre am Preussischen Hofe.* Extracts from a diary.

E. H. HUDSON. *Life and Times of Queen Louisa.*

*Cornhill Magazine.* An article on "The Girlhood of Queen Louisa," by A. W. Ward appeared in October, 1900.

## (8) INDIRECT

Sir J. R. SEELEY. *The Life and Times of Stein.*

L. VON RANKE. *Hardenberg's Denkwürdigkeiten.*

Sir GEORGE JACKSON. *Diaries and Letters.*

*Bulletins Officiels de Napoléon I.*

R. F. EYLERT. *Life of Frederick William III.*

H. STEFFENS. *Was Ich Erlebte.*

J. P. F. RICHTER's works, especially *Herbst-Blumine*, which contains "Schmerzlich tröstenden Erinnerungen an den neunzehnten Julius 1810".

See also the poems of Körner, Arndt, Rückert, Schenkendorf, Kleist, etc.

## APPENDIX V

### THE ORDER OF THE IRON CROSS AND THE ORDER OF LOUISA

The War of Liberation resulted in the institution of two orders associated with the Queen whose memory was so cherished by the patriots. On 10th March, 1813, Frederick William celebrated the anniversary of his wife's birthday by founding the Order of the Iron Cross. It is a military decoration, and admission to one of its three divisions is a reward of distinguished service much coveted by the German soldier.

On his own birthday, 3rd August, 1814, the King founded a corresponding order for women, who, either individually or as presidents of associations, had become specially prominent by their efforts to fit out volunteers and relieve the sufferings of the wounded. This was the famous Luisenorden. The first to receive the order and become its President was the King's sister-in-law, Princess William of Prussia. Originally the order was limited to a hundred members, but the number was soon extended. The Luisenorden continues to be the German woman's reward for conspicuous service to the Fatherland. The badge consists of a gold Maltese cross, enamelled in black on both sides. In the centre of both sides appears a round shield of pale blue enamel. On the obverse, the shield bears the letter L in silver surrounded by a crown of stars. On the reverse the shield bears the dates

1813.

1814



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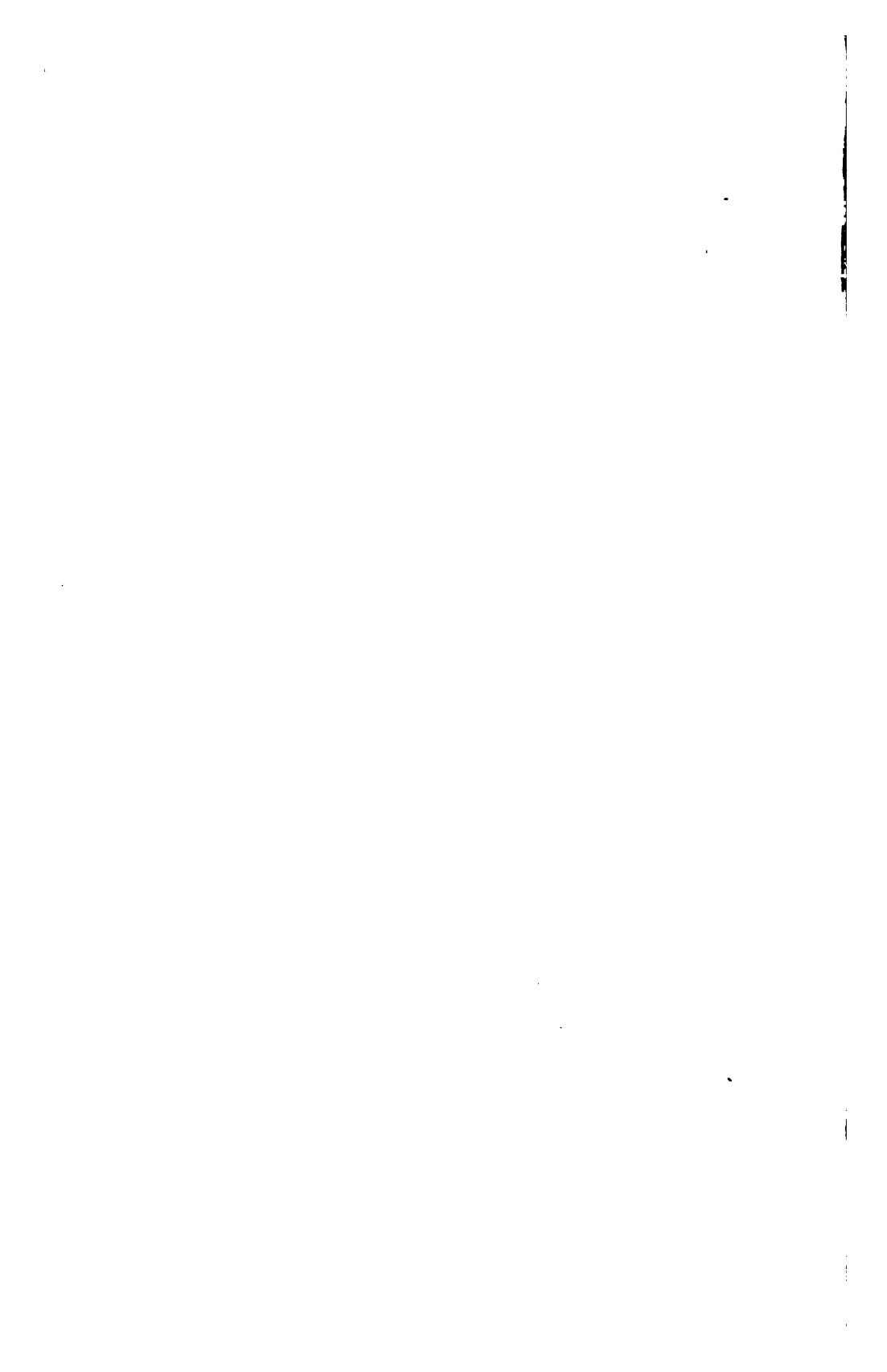
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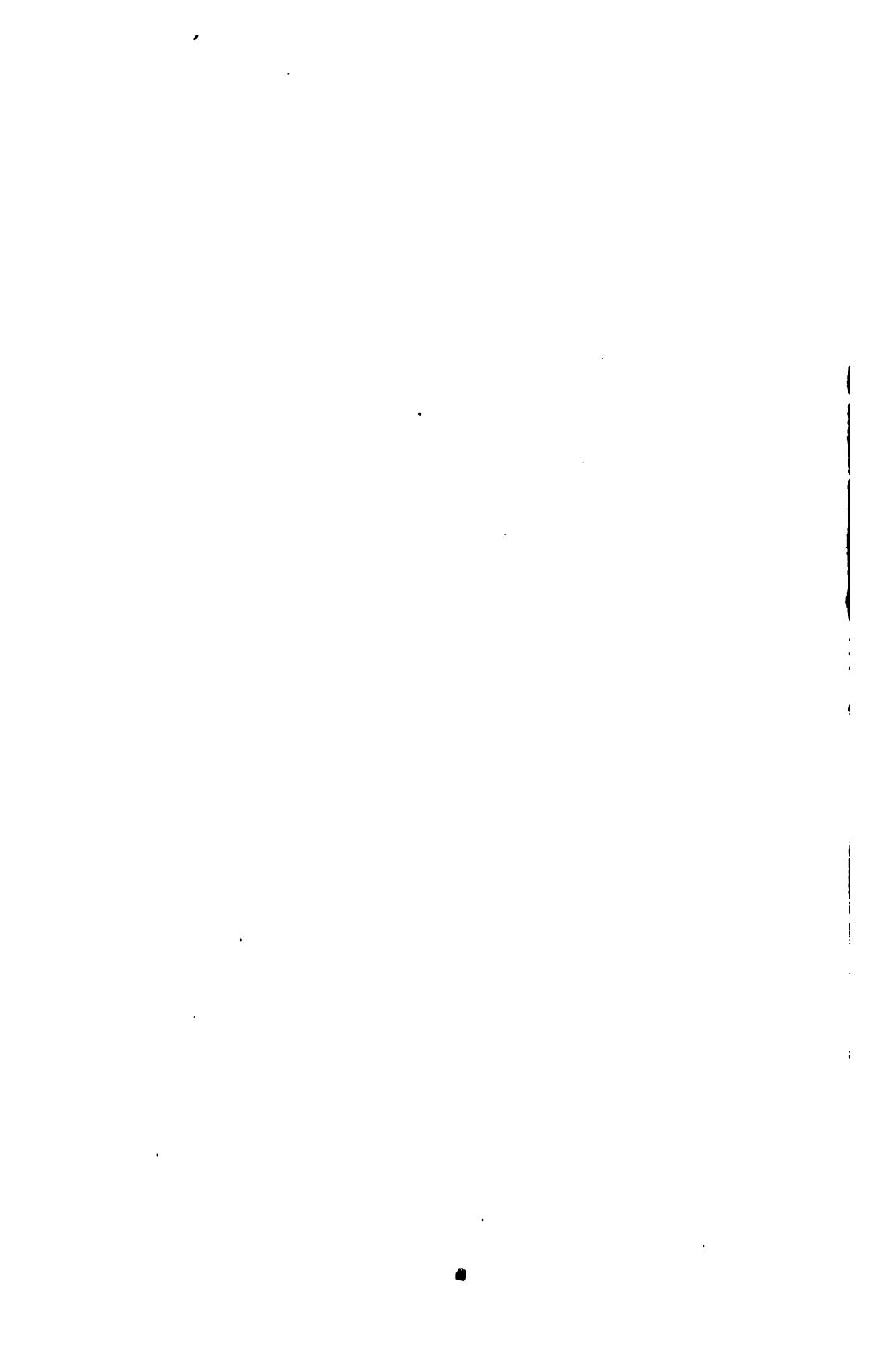
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